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TEN YEARS OF THOSE MONOLOGUES
MATT LABASH

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Andrew Ferguson tours the Newseum

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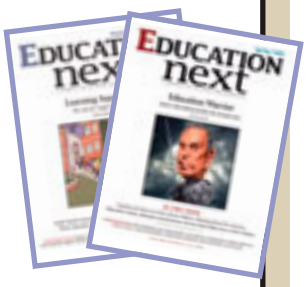

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### How Do We Transform Our Schools?

Taxpayers, philanthropists, and corporations have spent more than $60 billion to equip schools with computers in just the last two decades. And yet computers have not fundamentally transformed the way learning is accomplished or how the classroom operates. Basically computers sit quietly at the back of the classroom. That schools have gotten little back from this investment in technology should come as no surprise. When an organization implements an innovation, its natural instinct is to cram the innovation into its existing operating model. This is the wrong course. The way to transform an organization is to implement the innovation disruptively–not by using it to compete against the existing paradigm and serve existing customers, but to let it compete against "nonconsumption," where the alternative is nothing at all.

*—Clayton M. Christensen and Michael B. Horn*

### Is the Price Right?

In the contentious world of education politics, the need to spend more on public schools stands out as a rare point of agreement. Yet, while the public's views about spending on education are well known, the same cannot be said about the information on which those views are based. Our 2007 *Education Next*–PEPG survey directly addressed this question. We used data on actual spending and salaries, matched geographically to each respondent's school district or state, to compare people's perceptions with reality. The results are striking: Americans dramatically underestimate the amount spent on the public schools in their district. They also think that teachers earn, on average, far less than is actually the case. The public's strong preference that more be spent on public schools is based, at least in part, on faulty information.

*—William G. Howell and Martin R. West*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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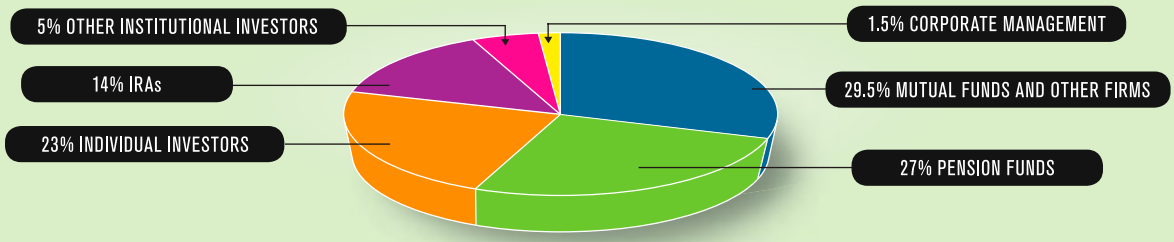


U.S. Oil and Natural Gas Company Ownership, 2007

# Do you own an oil company?

If you've ever wondered who owns America's oil and natural gas companies, chances are the answer is, "you do."

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The fact is that if you have a mutual fund account – and 55 million American households, with a median income of under $70,000, do – there's a good chance it invests in oil and natural gas company stocks. If you have an IRA or personal retirement account – and 45 million U.S. households do – there is a good chance it invests in energy stocks.

**Tens of millions of Americans own a piece of the U.S. oil and natural gas industry**

All this comes from a recent study* of U.S. oil and natural gas company ownership headed by Robert J. Shapiro, undersecretary of commerce for economic affairs under President Bill Clinton.

According to the study, the majority of the industry's shareholders are "middle-class U.S. households with mutual fund investments, pension accounts, other personal retirement accounts, and small personal portfolios."

What many may find particularly surprising is that our industry's corporate management owns only a tiny fraction of company shares.

Specifically, here is what the study found:

- 29.5 percent of U.S. oil and natural gas company shares are owned by mutual funds and other firms
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These findings tell us something very important: tens of millions of Americans have a stake in the U.S. oil and natural gas industry. When the industry's earnings are strong, the real winners are middle-class Americans, people investing in their retirement security or saving for their children's college education.

So when the political rhetoric gets hot about increasing energy taxes or taking "excess profits" from U.S. oil companies, it is important to step back, look at the facts, and ask yourself, "who does that really hurt?"

To read the full study, visit EnergyTomorrow.org.

THE *people* OF AMERICA'S OIL AND NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY

*SONECON: *The Distribution of Ownership of U.S. Oil and Natural Gas Companies*, September 2007

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BPA INTERNATIONAL



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# Still Crazy, After All These Years

Every now and then The Scrapbook is seized with the thought that the last, best hope of mankind—or at any rate, for our peace of mind—will be the death of the last surviving member of the Baby Boom generation. Of course, life expectancy being what it is these days, we acknowledge that moment is years and years away; but the prospect, no matter how distant, gives us hope.

Case in point: Last week's op-ed essay in the *New York Times* by 61-year-old novelist Paul Auster commemorating the 40th anniversary of the student strike/sit-in/vandalism/riot at Columbia University. Oh, in the intervening years, you had forgotten about the Columbia strike, which began as a protest over the construction of a gymnasium in Manhattan's Morningside Park? You hadn't realized that the anniversary was now upon us, much less worth four fat newspaper columns of reminiscence and analysis?

Clearly you are either not a Boomer or, in April 1968, were working at a job/studying for exams/raising a family—perhaps even serving your country in South Vietnam.

Anyway, Paul Auster—who "was not a violent person" at the time—was, instead, "a quiet, bookish young man, struggling to teach myself how to become a writer, immersed in my courses in literature and philosophy at Columbia." But when Columbia announced plans to build its new gym with a separate entrance for the general public—"the . . . plan was deemed to be both unjust and racist"—the quiet, bookish, nonviolent Paul Auster was suddenly transformed into somebody "crazy, crazy with the poison of Vietnam in my lungs."

So crazy, in fact, that he joined his fellow undergraduates in sudden, violent protest, not so much against the gym but "to vent their craziness, to lash out at something, anything, and since we were all students at Columbia, why not throw bricks at Columbia, since it was engaged in lucrative research projects for military contractors and thus was contributing to the war effort in Vietnam?"

Readers with long memories will recall the spectacle of Columbia undergraduates—children of privilege enrolled at a distinguished Ivy League institution founded when New York was still a British colony—invading classrooms and administrative offices, manhandling deans, professors, and fellow students, stealing and destroying books and documents, vandalizing chambers devoted to learning, roaming corridors in search of fodder to burn. The Columbia strike of 1968 made a temporary celebrity of a student named Mark Rudd, and publicized the episode's emblematic slogan: "Up against the wall, motherf—r!"

It also unleashed something instructive in Paul Auster:

> Speech followed tempestuous speech, the enraged crowd roared with approval, and then someone suggested that we all go to the construction site and tear down the chain-link fence. . . . The crowd thought that was an excellent idea, and so off it went, a throng of crazy, shouting students charging off the Columbia campus toward Morningside Park. Much to my astonishment, I was with them. What had happened to the gentle boy who planned to spend the rest of his life sitting alone in a room writing books? He was helping to tear down the fence. He tugged and pulled and pushed along with several dozen others and, truth be told, found much satisfaction in this crazy, destructive act.

One of the great parlor games of modern scholarship is pondering how the German people—citizens of the land of Bach, Kant, and Goethe—could find themselves marching in step behind Adolf Hitler. Well, Paul Auster and his Boomer companions at Columbia offer a clue. Here is as plain and startling a description of the mob mentality—together with the attendant hysteria and romanticized violence—as you are likely to find in the op-ed pages of the *New York Times*, nicely camouflaged in the language of nostalgia and social protest.

If, in this presidential election year, anyone wonders how the political left grew estranged from the American mainstream, yielding the politics of the past four decades, they need only read Paul Auster's tribute to the Columbia strike, written "alone in this room with a pen in my hand" as "I realize that I am still crazy, perhaps crazier than ever." ♦

## A Nobel Nomination

Scrapbook friend and occasional Weekly Standard contributor Kenneth Anderson nominates the South African longshoremen's union for the Nobel Peace Prize. Writing at his blog (*kennethandersonlawofwar.blogspot.com*), he notes,

> In the past few days, the South Africa longshoremen's union refused to unload small arms from a Chinese freighter being sold by a Chinese company to Zimbabwe, where chances are excellent the arms would be used against [Dictator Robert] Mugabe's political opposition. By their own refusal to offload the weapons, and by encouraging their union fellows in other southern Africa countries to



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*(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of May 28, 2001)*

follow suit, they have done more than anyone else to stir up public moral outrage that has enabled the pressure of democratic sovereigns—the U.S. and others—to have bite with China. They gave local moral cover to regional African organizations, whose individual countries have not been critical of Mugabe, to make statements against the arms shipments. . . .

For its contributions to world peace by standing up against arms shipments by an amoral, rising power, China, concerned only with commercial advantage and currying favor [with] its fellow dictators worldwide, and standing up for the population of Zimbabwe when damned few in the rest of the world are willing to do so . . . give the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize to the South African longshoremen's union.

THE SCRAPBOOK heartily concurs. ♦

## A Far Cry from 'Oceans 11'

It's a safe bet that for today's actors, filming on location isn't nearly as bad as it was 50 years ago. To wit, a recently republished June 5, 1958, item from *Variety* columnist Army Archerd.

"Paris is pleasure, particularly to Darryl Zanuck's beaten 'Roots of Heaven' battalion. Sickness besieged them through the African location." Zanuck, still recovering from malaria, "has come down with the shingles." Archerd met the Hollywood mogul for lunch, "where he was toying with a hamburger, the first food he'd touched in 40 hours. . . . Juliette Greco, desperately ill, nearly died when the ratio of red blood corpuscles passed the danger point. . . . Eddie Albert had been absolutely deranged for two weeks, Zanuck revealed. 'At times Albert had to be tied to his bed. Once he ran out into the 134-degree heat and shouted for the snow. His sunstroke was so severe that at times he tried to eat dirt on the ground. But John Huston and Errol Flynn have so far shown no ill effects of the location.'"

Adding insult to injury, the film bombed. (As for Huston and Flynn, Zanuck later told Archerd that the two remained healthy "because of their huge consumption of alcohol—no mosquito could bite them.") ♦

## Fight Fiercely, Harvard!

Good news from Cambridge. David Rockefeller, Class of 1936, has "pledged $100 million to increase dramatically learning opportunities for Harvard undergraduates through international experiences and participation in the arts. Mr. Rockefeller's is the largest gift from an alumnus in Harvard's history." For those keeping score at home, this will increase the $34 billion Harvard endowment by roughly one-third of one percent. ♦



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# Casual

## Naming Names

One early sign of man's superior station in the natural hierarchy was that he got to name the animals—this according to the Book of Genesis. If the job had fallen to me and my wife Cynthia, I'm afraid the story would have ended right there. Instead of a mess of well-named beasts and long chains of confidently though curiously named people begetting each other for many generations, the whole miniseries of God's chosen people would have run aground in episode one.

Part of our naming problem derives from differences in our styles of brainstorming. When I can't find the right word, I just start riffling through words like cards in a rolodex. J.D. Salinger, I once read, would sometimes pause for hours while he wrote out long lists of words in search of the perfect one. I count this as evidence that Salinger is *not* insane. (Kerouac, by contrast, believed your first idea was your best: Talk about crazy.) So when I have tried to think of names for our children, as we recently had occasion to do, I've just launched forth: Beth, Bathsheba, Brittany, Bentley, Brianna, Bopeep.

Around this point, my wife looks at me as if I am talking nonsense, and gives me an incredulous "What?" or just changes the subject. "Can you come with me next weekend to go shopping for a car seat?"

Cynthia's style of brainstorming is to wait until she actually has something to say. When I try to follow her lead, we'll find ourselves in the middle of long thoughtful pauses and not much else. To me this is too much like not having a conversation at all, so I'll change the subject. "Do we have anything else to do that weekend? Or will car-seat shopping be our big outing?"

While trying to find a name for our first child, we stumbled onto certain principles. Names found to be among the 20 or so most common were ruled out. Certain sound combinations were to be avoided (alliteration, per se, was acceptable, but nothing ending in X, because it's hard to say before the Sk sound at the beginning of our family name), and certain combinations of initials were verboten: SS, because it makes you think of Nazis, and BS, because if monogrammed on a shirt it would cause me and other 12-year-olds to laugh. We ended up breaking this last restriction. Still, it's funny how what a person will be called for their entire life sometimes comes about for the most trivial of reasons.

DARREN GYGI

Like associations. Name a name, and the mind thinks of a person who bears it; and one's feelings about the person usually determine one's feelings about the name. I would be surprised to hear of a parent who wanted their child to share a name with someone they loathed. So, despite the relative popularity of some presidential last names—Jackson, Madison—one does not hear of any tykes being called Nixon. This goes even for names from the Bible. Satan, despite its pleasing ring, remains unpopular.

Famous names, premade so to speak, do exert a certain appeal. I asked Cynthia, early on, if she would consider the names of my favorite writers. She was amenable, in a general way, until she realized that this meant naming our child Evelyn if it was a boy and George if it was a girl.

One problem with choosing a name just because it sounds good—as opposed to using a saint's name or a family name, say—is that its provenance can become disputed. Asked by a friend of ours why we had named our son Ben—this at a little party at our house—I explained how I had come to like the name. It happens to be my best friend's name, which actually made me hesitant to use it. But I liked the series of thoughts the name Ben led me to.

In college I had studied Rousseau, and in *Emile* he counsels men who prefer friendship to family to raise a son to be their friend—a line that always stuck with me. One day, I reflected, perhaps my son Ben will be to me (and I to him) as *simpatico* as the other Ben has been. Naming my son Ben was, for me, like naming him Friend, but without the poor kid having to go through life with a stupid name like Friend.

My wife, however, just liked the name. So when she overheard me explicating Rousseau, she looked over and delivered her usual incredulous "What?" Then, to debunk my story of how our son came to be named Ben, she made provocative use of his initials.

**David Skinner**



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the weekly Standard

# Carter's Heir

*"Senator Obama does not agree with President Carter's decision to go forward with this meeting because he does not support negotiations with Hamas until they renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist, and abide by past agreements."*

—Obama spokeswoman Jen Psaki, April 10, 2008

Jimmy Carter met with Hamas anyway, of course. He embraced Khaled Meshal, its leader, in Damascus on April 18. On April 19—Passover Eve—Hamas terrorists driving armored personnel carriers and car bombs disguised as Israeli Defense Force jeeps attacked border crossings in the Gaza Strip, wounding more than a dozen Israeli soldiers. All as Hamas fired rockets into the Israeli city of Sderot, home to some 20,000 men, women, and children. The goal? Same as always: terror and death.

On April 21, Carter announced to the world that Hamas would honor a peace deal with Israel negotiated by the Palestinian Authority if a majority of Palestinians also assented in a referendum. A few hours later, Carter's new friend Meshal contradicted him in public. Meeting the former president and Nobel Laureate had not swayed Meshal from his position that "peace" is just a pit stop on the road to Israel's extinction. The Carter mission was a bust.

He never should have gone. There was no good reason. Carter's defenders say the trip was justified because Hamas "won an election" in 2006. It did win parliamentary elections. But it nullified those elections in 2007 when it took over the Gaza Strip by force. The president of the Palestinian Authority is Mahmoud Abbas, elected in 2005. He is the head of state. He says he accepts the renunciation of violence and Israeli annihilation that is at the core of the 1993 Oslo Accords, which created the Palestinian government in the first place. Hamas rejected Oslo in 1993. It still does.

No one elected Meshal. He does not live in Gaza or the West Bank. He directs Hamas's war against Israel from afar at the behest of his Syrian and Iranian patrons. To visit him—to grant him legitimacy—is to prove that the Gazans are pawns in a larger conflict.

Mark Perry of the Conflicts Forum says Carter was right to meet with Hamas because it retains "prestige among the Palestinian people." But that is precisely a reason not to talk to Hamas. A faction recognized as an international terrorist organization by the United States and the European Union is not a legitimate political actor. This is something the Palestinians must understand if they are ever to join the community of democratic nation-states. That can't happen—it won't happen, it shouldn't happen—until groups that deploy murder to achieve genocidal ends face popular rejection and destruction. For Carter to grant Hamas more prestige by meeting its representatives delays that reckoning.

Perry argues that Hamas's "leaders have been showing real moderation." Unbelievable. Israel ended its occupation of Gaza in 2005. But the rocket assaults continue. Meantime, the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, an Israeli think tank, writes that "Hamas has accelerated its military buildup." This includes "increasing the size of its forces," now at 20,000 terrorists, and "developing powerful IEDs and placing them near roads."

Moderation? Writing in the *Washington Post* the day before Carter's visit, Hamas's "foreign minister," Mahmoud al-Zahar, stated that "resistance"—read: terror—"remains our only option." Zahar attacked Israel's "falsified history," its "foundational crime," the "material crimes of 1948." Not 1973. Not 1967. Only 1948, the year Israel was founded. That is the "crime" Hamas wants redressed. On what planet is it unreasonable to demand that a terrorist entity disavow ending your country before you—or an American ex-president engaging in self-parody—enter into negotiations with it?

Columnist Joe Klein blogs that "people who want to negotiate with our enemies almost always have a stronger argument than people who don't." It's a revealing statement, a window into the world of Carter-Obama liberalism: the make-believe land of treaties and conferences and "dialogue" where there is no distinction between friend and foe and evil men are routinely rewarded for flouting international law. This was the reigning doctrine during the 1990s. It is the reigning doctrine of Carter's Democratic party. And it may well be that Carter's trip is the shape of things to come.

Reread the above quotation from the Obama campaign. The Democratic frontrunner objects to meeting with Hamas because it supports terrorism, disavows Israel's right to exist, and has violated past treaties. Sound familiar? That is an exact description of the Iran ruled by the Ayatollah Khamenei and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Yet Obama has said that as president he would meet with Ahmadinejad without conditions. He'd pull a Carter. And the result of such desperate eagerness to "negotiate with our enemies" would be the same: empty words and emboldened adversaries.

—*Matthew Continetti, for the Editors*



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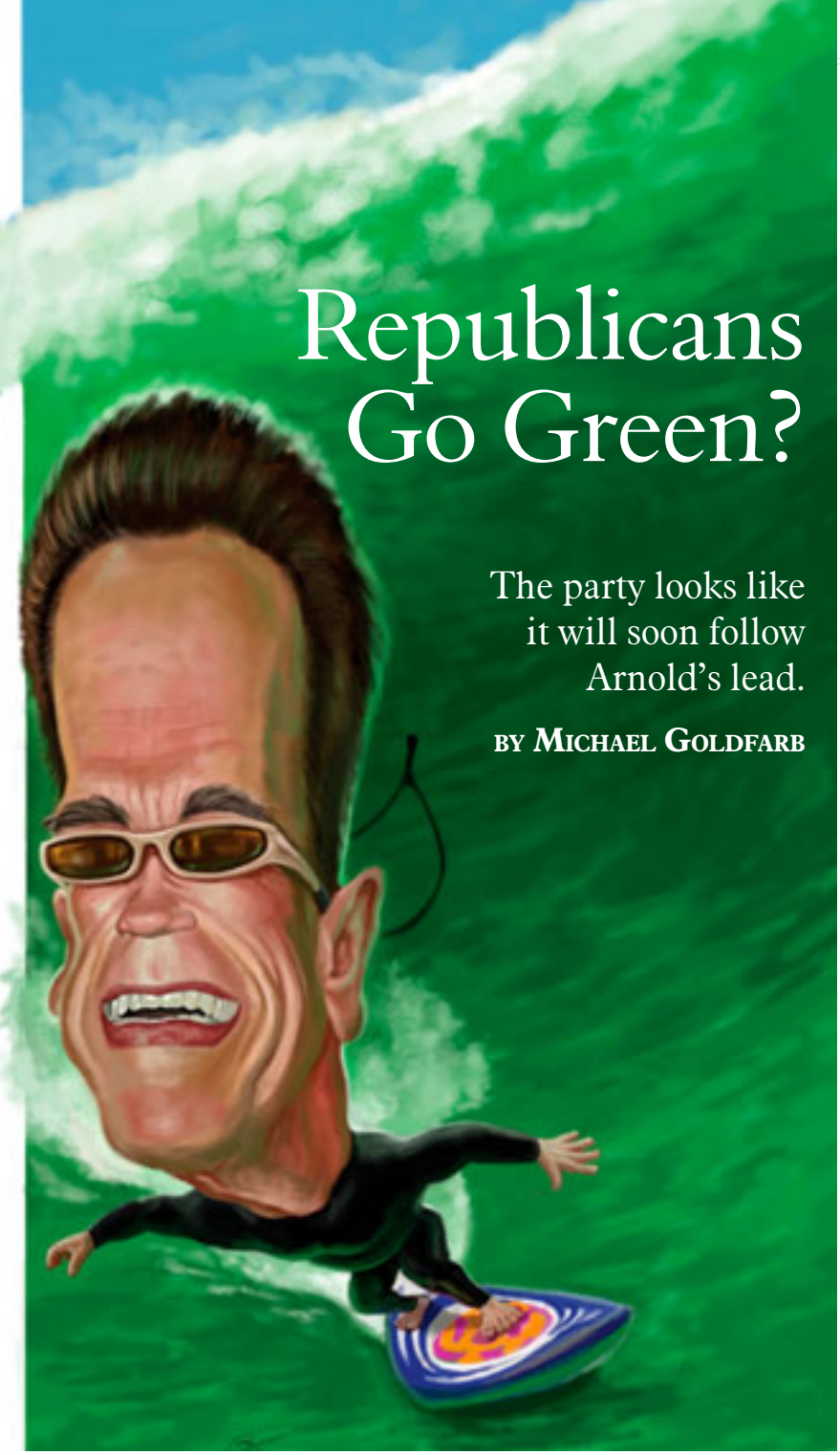

# Republicans Go Green?

## The party looks like it will soon follow Arnold's lead.

BY MICHAEL GOLDFARB

*New Haven*

California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, once the proud owner of a fleet of gas-guzzling Humvees, got religion on global warming pretty quickly after taking office. And in one of the great political reversals of the decade, he has emerged as a major figure in the environmental movement.

Last week Yale University hosted the signing by Schwarzenegger and a handful of other governors of a "Declaration on Climate Change" (no substance, just lofty principles). He delivered the keynote address to a large crowd of overachieving tree-huggers. If it had been a different audience, you might say he threw them some red meat. But given the venue, let's just say Schwarzenegger was dishing prime tofu.

But he also railed against the "envirowimps" who prevent him from taking tougher action on climate change. Environmentalists want renewable energy, he said, "but they don't want you to put it anywhere. . . . It's not just businesses that slows things down, it's not just Republicans that have slowed things down, it's also Democrats and sometimes those environmental activists that slow things down." Schwarzenegger also blamed Washington, and while he was careful not to name names, everybody understood that the man really slowing things down keeps office hours in an oval room.

Yet just two days before, President Bush had made an Arnold-like U-turn of his own, delivering a major speech on global warming in which he set a target date for capping greenhouse emissions (delightfully distant 2025), and spoke of "working toward a climate agreement that includes the meaningful participation of every major economy." Right on cue, conservatives began to worry that "the last line of defense has been breached" in the battle to prevent costly, and perhaps unnecessary, regulation of greenhouse gas emissions.

In truth, the defense had long ago been breached. Blowing off the threat from global warming, or more specifically the political support for addressing that threat, is no longer a serious option for this administration or its successor. All three remaining presidential candidates have offered concrete proposals for reining in greenhouse gas emissions, Congress is agitating for federal legislation, and the states, led by California, are getting antsy to act on their own. Put simply, the days of resolute federal inaction will soon be over regardless of what Bush does or doesn't say.

The president's speech was an acknowledgment of this reality and perhaps also a tactical retreat to better lines of defense against the socialist, antigrowth ambitions of climate activ-

PAUL MOYSE

*Michael Goldfarb is a Phillips Foundation fellow and online editor of* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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ists. For instance, insisting as Bush did that "every major economy" sign onto any international climate agreement makes international action on climate change quite unlikely. China, now the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, has no intention of reducing its emissions at the expense of economic growth. Likewise India, the world's fifth largest emitter, has rejected any binding reduction in emissions and recently announced plans to move forward with the construction of an "ultra mega" coal-fired power plant despite protests from environmental campaigners. Bush rightly points out that without their participation, no agreement can be meaningful. This is the first new line of defense.

But the inability to achieve international consensus is no impediment to Washington deciding to cripple the U.S. economy all by itself. The Supreme Court ruled last April that greenhouse gas emissions count as pollutants under the Clean Air Act, and that the Environmental Protection Agency must accordingly start regulating carbon emissions—the most ubiquitous byproduct of an industrial economy. This means the EPA could regulate huge chunks of the economy with a much heavier hand than Congress has ever dared to. It could shut down coal-fired power plants, regulate SUVs out of existence, abolish incandescent light bulbs (oops, that's already happening). Of course, Congress could rewrite the Clean Air Act to rein in this judicial mischief-making, but unless John Dingell has some blackmail photos of Nancy Pelosi, don't hold your breath.

The EPA, for now, is dragging its heels, and has moved into a phase of seeking public comment—no consequential regulatory decisions will be made until after Bush leaves office. But as the president stated in his speech, "decisions with such far-reaching impact should not be left to unelected regulators and judges." This principle is a second line of defense. If an Obama administration directs the EPA to impose costly and burdensome regulations, the political counterattack will follow Bush's script.

Meanwhile, progressive governors have rediscovered the joys of states' rights, as they seek to circumvent the Bush administration and impose their own regulatory solutions. With Schwarzenegger at the fore, several states had sought to impose more stringent standards for automobile emissions, but the EPA derailed the effort late last year when it refused to grant California the necessary waiver.

As the nation's largest automobile market, California's legislation would have effectively superseded national fuel economy standards (and handicapped American car companies already staggering from what looks like a recession). In his speech, the president made clear that "such decisions should be made by the elected representatives of the people they affect." That is to say, California shouldn't rule the rest of the country. Consider this a third line of defense.

Blowing off the threat from global warming, or more specifically the political support for addressing that threat, is no longer a serious option for this administration or its successor. All three presidential candidates have offered concrete proposals for reining in greenhouse gas emissions. The days of resolute federal inaction will soon be over.

Of course, most Democrats in Congress would be all too happy to give up state action on global warming in favor of a comprehensive national solution called "cap-and-trade"—an idea that John McCain is unfortunately enamored of. Cap-and-trade would set an absolute limit on national greenhouse gas emissions while creating a market for tradeable carbon credits. In a cap-and-trade system, companies that reduce their emissions below some level set by regulators would profit from selling credits to those that exceed their allotment. All three presidential candidates have backed cap-and-trade as the basis of any future climate change legislation.

But cap-and-trade has serious drawbacks, which is why Bush has signaled his intention to veto any such legislation. It would, for starters, be an exceedingly complex legal regime, allowing special interests to manipulate the regulations to their own advantage. More worrisome, cap-and-trade obscures the true costs of regulation. It is a tax by another name, and the costs would be largely hidden—Americans would see energy prices rise, with no way of determining what portion of the increase had been imposed by the political class in Washington.

The cost, it's safe to guess, would be enormous (that's why it would need to be hidden). At the governors conference at Yale, university president Richard Levin offered a Kerryesque defense: "Who among us would not be willing to pay a tax of one half percent to save the planet?" Moments later, Rajendra K. Pachauri, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and corecipient with Al Gore of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, put the cost even higher, envisioning an international regulatory regime under which, "in 2013, the growing cost to the global economy will be less than 3 percent of GDP." Who among us would be willing to pay so much?

Almost nobody. Not to mention, history shows that the rich pay for environmental remediation, not the poor; a world poorer by 3 percent a year will be that much less able to adapt to unpredictable changes in climate. And as Bush said in his speech, "the American people deserve an honest assessment of the costs, benefits and feasibility of any proposed solution." Cap-and-trade is feasible only because the costs cannot be assessed by the voters. Transparency, then, is


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the fourth principle, and a demand for it will serve as bulwark against the opaque system of cap-and-trade.

Any successful defense must be flexible and pragmatic, and at times opportunistic. The next administration may be determined to act with or without the participation of India and China. The best hope for those who understand that economic growth is not the cause of environmental degradation but the precondition for ameliorating it will be to insist on the basic principles of fairness, efficiency, and transparency.

As applied to greenhouse emissions, these principles lead straight down a well-paved road to a solution many conservatives will find hellish: a direct tax on carbon emissions.

Unlike with cap-and-trade, a carbon tax would allow Americans to see the increased cost of energy every time they filled up at the pump, paid the electric bill, or bought a plane ticket. They would see it right there on the receipt, and they would be able to hold their representatives accountable for the rate. The simple truth—as conservatives especially have been known to point out—is that you get less of something if you tax it. This is why serious environmentalists would be on board: Cap-and-trade, as its name implies, merely caps emissions. A carbon tax, by some estimates, would prompt an 11 percent drop in total emissions within a year of being enacted. The political trick would be to sweeten the blow with countervailing cuts in income and payroll taxes.

Doing no harm in response to global warming hysterics was one of the great achievements of the Bush administration, but indifference is not a tenable political strategy. Schwarzenegger and McCain figured this out not because they are mavericks, but because they are wily and *successful* politicians. So is Bush, in his own way. But politicians need more than defensive tactics. And if all else fails, pushing a transparent, national carbon tax will be the best chance for preventing great harm—and if it passes it will turn the politics of global warming upside down. ♦

# Housebroken 'Blue Dogs'

## Nancy Pelosi keeps them on a short leash.

**BY WHITNEY BLAKE**

When Democrats swept the 2006 midterm elections, several freshman House Democrats won on conservative platforms. A number of these so-called "Blue Dog" Democrats hail from districts that President Bush carried at least once. But the House belongs to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, not to Bush, and the Blue Dogs have caught on quickly.

On almost every issue, the freshman Blue Dogs have failed to advance their campaign agendas, which were carefully tailored to their moderate constituencies. From the war on terror, to taxes and the budget, to immigration and free trade, the Blue Dogs may talk tough, but they're more Yorkie than German Shepherd when confronted with Pelosi's iron grip.

One would think the Blue Dog coalition, with its 48 members, would have more sway in a House in which Democrats have only a 36-seat edge over Republicans. Instead, after initial bursts of rhetoric contrary to Pelosi's positions, most of them caved to the party leadership, even when that meant stepping out of alignment with their districts.

The fate of these freshmen this November is yet to be determined, but they aren't breathing easy. Twelve of the 13 are listed on the *Cook Political Report*'s most recent "competitive races" chart. Note that a heavy contingent—8 of the 13—represent key swing states: Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio, and Florida. Six are competing in districts Cook classifies as "likely Democratic" (Joe Donnelly, IN-2; Brad Ellsworth, IN-8; Michael Arcuri, NY-24; former NFL quarterback Heath Shuler, NC-11; Zack Space, OH-18; and Iraq war veteran Patrick Murphy, PA-8). Four are running in "lean Democratic" districts (Tim Mahoney, FL-16; Baron Hill, IN-9; Kirsten Gillibrand, NY-20; and Gabrielle Giffords, AZ-8). Two are in the "toss up" category (Chris Carney, PA-10, and Nick Lampson, TX-22). Cook deemed only one freshman Blue Dog safe (Charles Wilson, OH-6). In addition, Arcuri, Carney, Gillibrand, Giffords, Hill, Lampson, Mahoney, and Murphy were named in a leaked memo of 24 districts targeted by the National Republican Congressional Committee.

When it comes to the war on terror, the Blue Dogs folded on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) after a half-hearted attempt to stand their ground. On January 28, 21 Blue Dogs sent a letter to Pelosi asking her to move on the Senate's bill before some provisions expired. The letter outlined what should be included in the final legislation, notably immunity for telecommunications companies that cooperated with the government after the September 11 attacks by providing surveillance information. Failure to pass such a measure, the letter concluded, "could place our national security at undue risk."

But in the end, they toed the party line. The final House version of the bill, which did not include immunity for telecoms, passed on March 14, by a vote of 213 to 197. Fourteen of the signers voted for it. Carney and Shuler were the only two freshman Blue Dogs who stood by their convictions. Lampson, who didn't sign the original letter, also voted against it.

*Whitney Blake is a business reporter for the* Washington Examiner.



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FISA has become a "point of contention," said one Republican staffer, who predicts Republicans will have a "great amount of success" with the issue in moderate districts. In fact, the Defense of Democracies Action Fund started running radio spots in early April against Rep. Jim Matheson (UT-2), who signed the letter and then voted for Pelosi's bill, as well as TV ads in other states home to some freshman Blue Dogs.

The House Democrats' fiscal 2009 budget, which passed by a slim margin (212 to 207) on March 13, was $22.4 billion in excess of President Bush's request. "It's the same budget from last year with more spending piled on," absent reforms on earmarks and entitlements, said a Republican House aide.

The Blue Dogs "feel like they're an important part" of the budget outcome, one Democratic staffer told me in mid-March. But seven freshmen—Donnelly, Ellsworth, Giffords, Hill, Lampson, Murphy, and Shuler—thought twice about their constituents' response and voted "no." The only substantive Blue Dog agenda item adopted in the 2009 House budget was pay-as-you-go rules to offset spending. The Bush tax cuts, valued at about $683 billion, are not renewed under the plan, and a new $70 billion tax to pay for a patch to the alternative minimum tax is implemented, something Blue Dogs tout as an accomplishment.

But last year, Republicans managed to get an AMT patch passed without any offsets, at the time a $50 billion violation of pay-go, because of its popularity in the Senate, where it passed 88 to 5. Ultimately, 10 of the 13 freshman Blue Dogs voted for the patch without pay-go provisions; only Shuler, Hill, and Murphy held firm. The same thing may happen this year. Just last Thursday, the House and Senate budget chairs met with Blue Dogs to discuss alternatives in order to get final budget passage.

On free trade, the Blue Dogs went along with Pelosi's desire to bury the Colombia trade pact—which had been negotiated with House Ways and Means chairman Charlie Rangel at the table—by eliminating the mandatory up-or-down vote under fast-track authority privileges. A floor vote would have forced Democrats to go on record, but a vote to prevent the vote is just as revealing. On April 10, the measure passed, 224 to 195. Just three freshman Blue Dogs—Hill, Lampson, and Mahoney—bucked Pelosi's action.

Even a *Washington Post* editorial took House Democrats to task: "Economically, it should be a no-brainer—especially at a time of rising U.S. joblessness. . . . Politically, too, the agreement is in the American interest, as a reward to a friendly, democratic government."

Last, the Blue Dogs are not making progress on immigration reform, the sleeper issue of the 2006 elections. The one exception: Heath Shuler proposed a comprehensive plan to beef up border security with 8,000 new border agents and new technology, expand the E-Verify program to all employers to check employees' legal status, and add more Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and training.

Pelosi will not put his bill on the agenda, so Republicans are trying to get a majority of representatives to sign a discharge petition, moving the bill directly to the floor. To date, 186 of the required 218 representatives have signed the petition.

But the freshman Blue Dogs are not coming to the aid of one of their own. Only Carney, Donnelly, Ellsworth, and Lampson have added their names. Arcuri, Gillibrand, Hill, Murphy, and Space have cosponsored the bill but have yet to support the discharge petition.

"Politically this could be very perilous for them," said Antonia Ferrier, communications director for minority whip Roy Blunt. Either they look too weak to stand up to the leadership, or they are out of sync with their districts and really aren't conservative, she added.

In just four short months, the Blue Dogs have helped kill a key national security program, as well as a free trade agreement that's been in the works for over two years; welcomed the largest tax increase in history; and left immigration reform to languish indefinitely. House Republicans will still have an uphill election battle, but if the Blue Dogs keep up this pace, the hill won't be as steep. ♦

On almost every issue, the freshman Blue Dogs have failed to advance their campaign agendas, which were carefully tailored to their moderate constituencies. From the war on terror, to taxes and the budget, to immigration and free trade, the Blue Dogs may talk tough, but they're more Yorkie than German Shepherd in Pelosi's iron grip.

**Clockwise from top left: Arcuri, Lampson, Murphy, Carney, Shuler, Mahoney**

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EMMANUEL DUNAND / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

# To Tell the Truth

## Will the real Barack Obama please stand up?

**BY FRED BARNES**

E.J. Dionne's column in the *Washington Post* asked this question about Barack Obama: "Is he Adlai Stevenson or John F. Kennedy?" In the *New Republic* online, John Judis wondered if Obama might be "the next" George McGovern, the 1972 Democratic presidential nominee who lost in a landslide. Both are interesting questions. But there's a more relevant and important one: Is Obama who he says he is?

This matters because Americans choose an individual, not a party, to fill the presidency. If voters elected the next president by party preference, the White House successor to George W. Bush would almost certainly be a Democrat. But we don't. And in 2008, as political scientist James Ceaser has noted, "the choice of the person will loom large"—indeed, larger than usual.

*Fred Barnes is executive editor of* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Senator Obama, the most exciting presidential candidate in decades and the likely Democratic nominee, is the main reason. He's running a strikingly personal campaign that places far less emphasis on ideology or a partisan agenda than on the man himself, Obama the person. He's running as a new kind of national leader who rejects "the same old politics" and intends to change the way Washington works and the country is governed.

This self-description is idealistic, lofty, and extravagant. He further characterizes himself as someone who unites political foes, rejects partisanship, will end polarization, and is neither a liberal nor an elitist. If what he says is true, he comes close to being what most Americans say they seek in a president. But is he telling the truth?

Let's look at Obama's claims for himself without either flyspecking them for flaws or setting the bar too high. No one should expect a politician to be brutally candid in talking about himself. That's asking too much. Exaggeration is acceptable. Dishonesty isn't.

Is it fair for Obama to call himself a uniter who brings people together? That depends on whether you're talking about his presidential campaign or his three-plus years in the Senate. An impressive coalition of liberal (John Kerry, Chris Dodd) and moderate Democrats (Sam Nunn, Oklahoma governor Brad Henry) has come together to support Obama's candidacy. He's also proved attractive to independents and to a surprising number of Republicans.

But as a senator—and this surely is a more important test—Obama has been anything but a uniter. Instead, he's a reliable Democratic vote. He infuriates Republican senators when he campaigns as a Democrat willing and eager to compromise with them. It's practically never happened.

The most notable instance of bipartisanship since Obama entered the Senate was the Gang of 14, seven Republicans and seven Democrats who reached agreement on judicial nominations. Obama lauded the group but didn't join it. Why not? Because the senators allowed several conservative nominees to be confirmed.

Obama was a minor player in the bipartisan Senate bill on immigration that failed last year. But he violated the spirit of the compromise. After authors agreed to put an item in the bill at Obama's request, he proceeded to vote for poison pill amendments favored by liberal groups, amendments that, if passed, would have killed the bipartisan deal.

Despite polarization, the Senate is an opportunity-rich environment for bipartisan compromise. But Obama has never been a leader in crossing the aisle. His most famous stab at compromise was a lobbying reform bill he cosponsored with John McCain. But Obama eventually backed out, prompting an angry response from McCain.

Ideology? The *National Journal* rated Obama's voting record the most liberal in the Senate, but he says he's not a liberal. "Oh, he's liberal, he's lib-



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eral," he said last month, making fun of his critics. "Let me tell you something. There's nothing liberal about wanting to reduce money in politics. That is common sense. There's nothing liberal about wanting to make sure [our soldiers] are treated properly when they come home. There's nothing liberal about wanting to make sure everybody has health care." He didn't mention his voting record.

Obama uses the phrase "okey-doke" to characterize the old-fashioned politics he opposes. One of his responses to the liberal charge is: "Don't let them run that 'okey-doke' on you."

But it's Obama's insistence he's not a liberal that's closer to being an okey-doke. On every major issue, foreign or domestic, he votes the liberal line. And he has yet to defy the wishes of a single major liberal pressure group. He's supposedly waiting for the fall election to do so. Moderates and conservatives await that moment.

Obama is equally emphatic in denying he's an elitist. To be fair, "elitism" is a somewhat amorphous charge, based particularly on his comment at a San Francisco fundraiser last month that small town Pennsylvanians are "bitter" about their circumstances and "cling" to issues like guns and religion as a result. Obama has said he was misunderstood, but he hasn't repudiated his statement.

He took Hillary Clinton to task for saying, "I'm elitist, out of touch, condescending. Let me be absolutely clear. It would be pretty hard for me to be condescending towards people of faith since I'm a person of faith and have done more than most other campaigns in reaching out specifically to people of faith. . . . The same is true with respect to gun owners. . . . They have supported me precisely because I have listened to them and I know them well."

Obama told a gathering of veterans in Washington, Pennsylvania, he's "amused at this notion of elitist." He noted he was "raised by a single mom," was "on food stamps for a while," and "went to school on scholarship. . . . So when somebody makes that argument, particularly given that I've spent my entire life working with workers, low-income communities, to try to make people's lives a little better, then that's when you know we're in political silly season."

He has a point. Growing up and then as a young lawyer, he wasn't an elitist. But the issue now, for what it's worth, is whether Obama belongs to the educated, sophisticated upper class of urban America, and reflects the attitudes of this class. At least in stolen moments, he does.

So is Obama who he says he is? Of course not. He's a liberal, a bit to the left, and, like most graduates of Harvard Law, a member of America's meritocratic (but nonetheless elite) upper class. He's seized on a big idea—bringing Americans together in a rebirth of national unity—to frame his campaign. Does this make him a phony? I don't think so. But it does make him something else he insists he's not, a conventional politician with a clever spiel. ♦

MICHAEL RAMIREZ



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# The Petraeus Promotion

## Good for Iraq, good for the Middle East . . . and good for McCain. BY JEFFREY BELL

President Bush's decision to elevate General David Petraeus to lead the Central Command is not only an act of courage, it may prove to be transformative in the global war on terror, and even in the 2008 election. God has apparently seen fit to give the U.S. Army a great general in this time of need, a simple fact which President Bush has had the sense to recognize and act on. Bush's action comes not a moment too soon, and given Petraeus's ability, perhaps not too late either.

Why do I rank Petraeus so high? When it comes to military strategy, I defer to others (including several who write for this magazine) to put his generalship in its larger historical context. To all but the willful and the blind, though, the swiftness of the turnaround in Iraq is indisputable. And to anyone who has had even a worm's eye view of the U.S. Army and its bureaucratic tendencies, it is not just indisputable but astounding.

I was a lowly 24-year-old draftee, a specialist fourth class, stationed with an American advisory team to a South Vietnamese infantry division in the Mekong Delta when the Tet offensive happened in February 1968. As is now well known, American and South Vietnamese units fought well, and the enemy was dealt a devastating blow in military terms. But the U.S. Army had a commanding general, William Westmoreland, who had no clue what had happened.

*Jeffrey Bell is a visiting fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, where he is writing a book on American social conservatism to be published by Encounter Books in 2009.*

We then had about 540,000 soldiers in South Vietnam. Westmoreland flew to Washington and demanded that President Johnson send an additional 206,000. By doing so, he terminated his own prospects of success in Vietnam and also those of Johnson, who within a month announced his decision not to seek reelection. Westmoreland's visible panic dealt a devastating blow to home-front support for the war at a moment when the enemy had just been badly depleted on the battlefield. This is what a reactive, bureaucratic commander is capable of accomplishing in a single month.

*General Petraeus before Congress, April 9*

UPI PHOTO / KEVIN DIETSCH

Petraeus is the polar opposite of Westmoreland, and for that matter the generals who preceded him in command of our forces in Iraq. From the moment he arrived, greater risk and greater accountability were demanded of our troops, which they gladly gave because they sensed he had a plan and knew exactly what he was doing.

As originally reported in the press, the emphasis on living in the neighborhoods and mingling with Iraqis had a touchy-feely overtone, making even some hawks wonder if Petraeus was leaving our soldiers needlessly vulnerable. But the move to the neighborhoods had a predominantly military aim, which was reliable intelligence about Al Qaeda in Iraq and its fellow-travelers.

The move worked and the intelligence flowed because Petraeus was correct in sensing that the jihadists' power over the locals stemmed not from sympathy but from fear. Once the Iraqis started telling our forces where the enemy was, the jihadists saw their safe havens swiftly disappear, and Petraeus's troops became a killing machine. That is why the levels of violence in Sunni Iraq declined so swiftly. The Sadrists and other Iranian-backed Shiite militiamen are well aware of the fate of the Sunni jihadists and will be deeply affected by it, whether Petraeus or his superb deputy and successor, General Raymond Odierno, is in command when the final crunch comes.

When Petraeus gains operational control over the war in Afghanistan, something similar will happen to the Taliban. I say this not because I believe the military challenge of the Taliban in Afghanistan is identical to the challenge of Al Qaeda in Iraq. I say this because Petraeus is a great general and therefore will know how much he needs to adapt (or for all I know reverse) the approach that worked for him in Iraq. If the Taliban have any doubt of this, they will learn within months or perhaps even weeks of his arrival in Tampa that they are dealing with an American commander who knows how to kill them.

When he was a regional commander in an earlier phase of the Iraq war, Petraeus was nicknamed King David for his ability to work out mutually beneficial arrangements with local sheikhs and tribal leaders. It's a good bet that Petraeus,



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who is a sophisticated political general with skills in the same ballpark as those of George Marshall or Dwight Eisenhower, will channel these skills in the form of carrots and sticks toward tribal warlords in Pakistan's northwest provinces. Osama bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, and their mainly Arab associates should never be underestimated, but they will learn that their physical safety has suddenly become considerably more in doubt than when their main worry was General Musharraf and the deeply ambivalent military-intelligence complex based in Islamabad.

The change at Central Command should also prove far from reassuring to Iran. At first glance President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the Revolutionary Guard will no doubt welcome Petraeus's departure from Iraq before he has a chance to finish off their Sadrist clients as he did the Sunni jihadists to the north. But they are aware that General Odierno will be no walk in the park. And the transition from the previous head of Central Command—the buffoonish, publicity-hungry Admiral William "Fox" Fallon, with his semi-public vows to let Bush invade Iran only over his dead body—to General Petraeus, the one man Fallon publicly and privately disdained nearly as much as he did his commander in chief, is likely to be more than a little disconcerting to Tehran.

Iran and its drive to acquire nuclear weapons is the central challenge of American foreign policy, whoever becomes the next president. But the days, no doubt highly satisfying to Tehran, when Central Command saw its mission as threatening to sabotage any conceivable presidential coercion of Iran will most decidedly be over. And all this is without calculating the reaction of Ahmadinejad, the Revolutionary Guard, and Ayatollah Khamenei to the possibility of Petraeus-inflicted woe on the jihadists in Afghanistan, to Iran's east, comparable to that recently experienced in Iraq, to their west.

How can Petraeus's promotion to CENTCOM, which may take another four months, matter all that much when the Bush administration itself will then have only four months or so to go? The answer is that this nomination is potentially transformative of 2008 politics as well as the course of the global war.

It's true that George W. Bush will likely be back in Crawford before Petraeus's appointment can have borne much military fruit. But on what basis could the Democrats oppose the Petraeus nomination, or (should one of them be elected president) sack him on January 20, 2009? It is they, after all, who say that Iraq is a diversion from the real action, which is in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Will the general who (as even most of them concede) greatly improved the situation in Iraq, the war that was a Bush blunder and therefore unwinnable, not be allowed to pursue the "real" war in Afghanistan, which all of them support?

For John McCain, on the other hand, no adjustment or departure will be required. He vocally supported the appointment of Petraeus to the Iraq command and endorsed Petraeus's recommendation of the troop surge in Iraq, after all, when virtually no one in Congress, Republican or Democrat, was willing to speak above a whisper in support of President Bush's decision to do so. Indeed, McCain advocated a troop surge in Iraq, and the appointment of someone like Petraeus to execute it, long before Bush did.

Assuming Petraeus is confirmed, McCain in his fall campaign will undoubtedly speak in favor of keeping the most gifted American general of the past half-century on duty until the whole job is done—with Iraq as well as Afghanistan pacified, Osama bin Laden dispatched, and Iran prevented from acquiring nuclear weapons. If the Democrats have a different thought, they would then have to say what parts of that package they oppose and what general and what military plan *they* have in mind to finish the job, however they define it. Good luck. ♦


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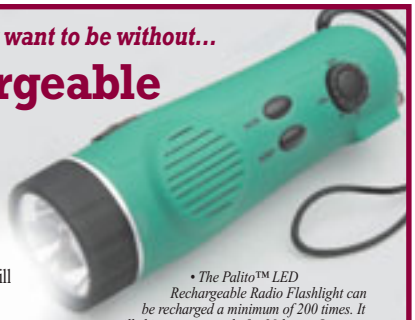

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# "One Land for Two Peoples"

## Is it a solution to the Arab/Israeli conflict or a recipe for disaster?

For decades, the declared thrust of the Palestinians has been their desire of having their own state – in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") and in the Gaza Strip. Now, a new idea has taken hold and is propagated in national media: a binational state, encompassing those territories and "Israel proper." The slogan is "One Land for Two Peoples."

### What are the facts?

Review of history: The Arabs have launched four major wars against Israel, at the end of which Israel remained in possession of all the lands west of the Jordan River, the undivided city of Jerusalem, the vast Sinai, the Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip. In what was in all likelihood a major act of folly, but in order to attain peace with Egypt, Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt. But the peace with Egypt is the coldest imaginable.

Thus, having been unable to defeat Israel in war and unable to wear it down by their "intifadas," the Arabs had to think up something new in order to destroy Israel. And they did indeed come up with something. According to the late and unlamented Yasser Arafat, the most important weapon of the Arabs is the "Arab womb," the motto being: "If we can't defeat them in war, let's outbreed them." And that is exactly what would happen if there ever were a "binational" state. There can be little doubt that, within a generation or less, the Arabs would have outbred their Jewish fellow citizens and would have become the majority in the country. They would thus have accomplished what they were unable to attain by any other means, namely the destruction of the Jewish state.

> "The Palestinians, just as the over one million Arabs now living in Israel with full rights as citizens, could be part of Israel, with full autonomy and with their own internal governance…"

Artificial countries: With the exception of Egypt, all the countries of the Middle East are artificial creations. After World War I, England and France carved up the Ottoman Empire, with England retaining what are now Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Iraq, and France being in possession of what are now Syria and Lebanon.

In 1917, the Balfour Declaration, proclaimed by the British mandatory power, established all of Palestine – east and west of the Jordan River – as the reconstituted homeland for the Jewish people. This was ratified by the 52 countries of the League of Nations. Insistence that these are Arab lands and that the Jews are "occupiers" is a notion that is fairly new. But it has been repeated so often and for so long that most of the world has come to believe it. But it has no basis in fact at all. It is a myth.

If Israel were ever to consent to the creation of a binational state, how would it work out? To get the answer, one only needs to go next door to Lebanon. In order to provide a safe haven for the Maronite Christians, the French carved out the artificial state of Lebanon. Within just one generation, the population ratio had begun to change in favor of the Muslims. Strife broke out, which ultimately culminated in a bloody civil war that lasted for close to ten years and in which scores of thousands died. Can anybody really believe that, given the mortal hatred of the Muslims against the Jews, things would be any different in Israel/Palestine? Of course not! A bloody civil war would be the inevitable result.

Created as a Jewish state: Israel was created as a Jewish state by the will of the nations of the world and by the brain and brawn of the Jewish people. There is no reason why the Israelis would turn their country over to those who are their declared mortal enemies. Do the Turks plan to establish a binational state with the Kurds (or do the Iranians or Iraqis, for that matter)? Do the Spaniards consider a binational state with the Basques? Do the Chinese propose the formation of a binational state with the Tibetans? Of course not. Why, therefore, should Israel even consider sharing its country with those whose never-changing agenda is its destruction? Why should Israel, one of the most advanced countries in the world in virtually every field of endeavor, make itself hostage to those who live in backwardness and ignorance and who are guided by religious fanaticism? Israel was founded to be the Jewish homeland and it will never acquiesce to its own destruction by allowing itself to become a binational state.

A binational state is a non-starter and, realistically, a Palestinian state in any portion of Judea/Samaria and Gaza (even in the unlikely case that the Israelis were ever willing to concede it) would not be viable. What then is the possible solution to this enduring problem? The Palestinians, just as the over one million Arabs now living in Israel with full rights as citizens, could be part of Israel, with full autonomy and with their own internal governance (something that the Kurds would give anything to attain). If they were unhappy with that solution they would be at liberty to migrate to any of the over twenty Arab countries that, one would hope, would welcome them with open arms.

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Iraqi troops take control of Basra, April 19, 2008.

AFP/ ESSAM AL-SUDANI



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# How We'll Know When We've Won

*A definition of success in Iraq*

By Frederick W. Kagan

The president's nomination of generals David Petraeus and Raymond Odierno to take command of U.S. Central Command and Multinational Force-Iraq, respectively, was obviously the right decision. By experience and temperament and demonstrated success, both men are perfectly suited to these jobs. Given the political climate in Washington, however, their nominations are likely to be attacked with the same tired arguments war critics used to try to drown out reports of progress in Iraq during the recent Petraeus-Crocker hearings. So before the shouting begins again, let us consider in detail one of the most important of these arguments: that no one has offered any clear definition of success in Iraq.

Virtually everyone who wants to win this war agrees: Success will have been achieved when Iraq is a stable, representative state that controls its own territory, is oriented toward the West, and is an ally in the struggle against militant Islamism, whether Sunni or Shia. This has been said over and over. Why won't war critics hear it? Is it because they reject the notion that such success is achievable and therefore see the definition as dishonest or delusional? Is it because George Bush has used versions of it and thus discredited it in the eyes of those who hate him? Or is it because it does not offer easily verifiable benchmarks to tell us whether or not we are succeeding? There could be other reasons—perhaps critics fear that even thinking about success or failure in Iraq will weaken their demand for an immediate "end to the war." Whatever the explanation for this tiresome deafness, here is one more attempt to flesh out what success in Iraq means and how we can evaluate progress toward it.

*Frederick W. Kagan is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.*

## Success defined

■ **A stable state.** An unstable Iraq is a recipe for continued violence throughout the Middle East. Iraq's internal conflicts could spread to its neighbors or lure them into meddling in its struggles. An unstable Iraq would continue to generate large refugee flows, destabilizing vulnerable nearby states. An unstable Iraq would enormously complicate efforts by the United States or any other state to combat terrorists on Iraqi soil. An unstable Iraq would invite the intervention of opportunist neighbors. The Middle East being an area of vital importance to the United States and its allies, all these developments would harm America's interests.

■ **A representative state.** Some war critics (and even some supporters) argue that the goal of "democratizing" Iraq is overoptimistic, even hopeless. So what are the alternatives? Either Iraq can be ruled by a strongman, as it was in the past, or it can be partitioned into several more homogeneous territories, each ruled according to its own desires. Before settling for either of these, we should note that the overwhelming majority of Iraqis continue to manifest their desire for representative government, as evidenced by the 8 million who voted in the last elections, the 90 percent of Sunni Arab Iraqis who tell pollsters they will vote in the upcoming provincial elections, and the sense on the streets that anyone who tries to eliminate representative government will do so at his peril. Beyond that, we must note that neither of the two suggested alternatives is compatible with stability. Nevertheless, let us examine them.

*A strongman.* Iraq is a multiethnic, multisectarian state



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Voting in Sadr City: An overwhelming majority of Iraqis continue to manifest their desire for representative government.

GETTY IMAGES / WATHIQ KHUZAIE

just emerging from a sectarian civil war. How could a strongman rule it other than by oppression and violence? Any strongman would have to come from one or another of the ethno-sectarian groups, and he would almost certainly repress the others. Although he might, in time, establish a secure authoritarian regime, the history of such regimes suggests that Iraq would remain violent and unstable for years, perhaps decades, before all opposition was crushed. This option would not sit well with American consciences.

*Partition.* Partitioning Iraq would generate enormous instability for the foreseeable future. Again, virtually no Arab Iraqis want to see the country partitioned; the Sunni, in particular, are bitterly opposed. But their desires aside, could a partitioned Iraq be stable? The Kurds, after all, already have their region. What would happen if the Shia got all nine provinces south of Baghdad, and the Sunni got Anbar, Salah-ad-Din, and whatever part of Ninewa the Kurds chose to give them? Well, there would be the problem of Baghdad and Diyala, the two mixed provinces, containing mixed cities. Despite the prevailing mythology, Baghdad has not been "cleansed" so as to produce stable sectarian borders. The largely Sunni west contains the Khadimiyah shrine, which the Shia will never abandon, while the largely Shia east contains the stubborn Sunni enclave in Adhamiya. The Sunni in Adhamiya have just gone through many months of hell to hang on to their traditional ground. And there are other enclaves on both sides of the river. Any "cleansing" of them would involve the death or forced migration of tens or possibly hundreds of thousands. Attempts to divide Diyala and even Ninewa would produce similar results. If ethno-sectarian conflict restarted in Iraq on a large scale, cleansing might make this solution more feasible, but at enormous human cost. In the current context, even to seriously propose it threatens Iraq's stability.

■ **A state that controls its territory.** We already have an example of a sovereign, quasi-stable state confronting terrorist foes that is theoretically allied to the United States but has no American troops and does not control all of its own territory. It is Pakistan, whose ungoverned territories in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Northwest Frontier Province have become safe havens for the leaders of the global al Qaeda network. If the United States abandoned Iraq before Iraq could control all of its territory with its own forces, we might make way for similar safe havens in the heart of the Middle East. It is clearly not in America's interests to create a Pakistan on the Euphrates.

■ **A state oriented toward the West.** It is also clearly against America's interests for Iraq to become an Iranian puppet. Some in the United States, however, see that development as inevitable; they point to geography and religious ties. Some even say that the United States should not only acquiesce in the inevitable but embrace it, reaching out to the Iranians for their assistance in smoothing our withdrawal as they establish their domination. But why? Iran has not dominated Iraq in centuries. True, the Sunni-Shia divide is profound, but so is the Arab-Persian divide. Iraq's Shia, remember, enthusiastically supported Saddam Hussein's war against their Iranian co-religionists in the 1980s—a sectarian "betrayal" for which the Iranians have never forgiven them. Again, American troops and civilians who live day to day with Iraqis throughout the country report a dramatic rise in anti-Persian sentiment,



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coincident with a rise in Iraqi Arab nationalism. But back in the United States, the debate over Iraq is scarcely tethered to reality on the ground. In the simple terms suitable to that debate, then, suffice it to say that neither shared Shia faith nor a shared border has historically led to Iranian domination of Iraq. There is no reason to assume it will do so now.

■ **An ally in the struggle against militant Islamism.** Whatever Saddam Hussein's ties were to al Qaeda before the invasion, the reality today is that an important al Qaeda franchise has established itself in Iraq. It initially had the support of a significant portion of Iraq's Sunni Arab community, but that community—with critical American support—has rejected al Qaeda and united with Iraq's Shia and Kurds to fight it.

As a result, there is no state in the world that is more committed than Iraq to defeating al Qaeda. None has mobilized more troops to fight al Qaeda or suffered more civilian casualties at the hands of al Qaeda—or, for that matter, taken more police and military casualties. Iraq is already America's best ally in the struggle against al Qaeda. Moreover, the recent decision of Iraq's government to go after illegal, Iranian-backed Shia militias and terror groups shows that even a Shia government in Baghdad can be a good partner in the struggle against Shia extremism as well.

Much has been made of the inadequacy of the Iraqi Security Forces' performance in Basra. If the Pakistani army had performed half as well in its efforts to clear al Qaeda out of the tribal areas, we would be cheering. Instead, Pakistani soldiers surrendered to al Qaeda by the hundreds, and Islamabad shut the operation down; it is now apparently on the verge of a deal with the terrorist leader who killed Benazir Bhutto. Iraqi Security Forces who underperformed were fired and replaced, and operations in Basra and elsewhere continue. The United States has given Pakistan billions in aid since 9/11 so that it could fight al Qaeda in the tribal areas. To be sure, it has spent far more billions on the Iraq war. Still, one may wonder which money has produced real success in the war on terror, and which has been wasted.

## Progress measured

■ **Stability.** Violence is the most obvious indicator of instability and the easiest to measure. The fact that violence has fallen dramatically in Iraq since the end of 2006 is evidence of improving stability. But critics are right to point out that areas tend to be peaceful both when government forces control them completely and when insurgents control them completely. Violence can drop either because the government is winning or because insurgents are consolidating their gains. So in addition to counting casualties and attacks, it is necessary to evaluate whether government control has been expanding or contracting. In fact, it has expanded dramatically over the past 15 months.

At the end of 2006, Sunni Arab insurgents controlled most of Anbar province, large areas of Salah-ad-Din and Diyala, southern Baghdad and northern Babil provinces (the "triangle of death"), and large areas of Baghdad itself including the Ameriya, Adhamiya, Ghazaliya, and Dora neighborhoods, which were fortified al Qaeda bastions. Shia militias controlled Sadr City almost completely—American forces could not even enter the area, and virtually no Iraqi forces in Sadr City operated independently of the militias; the militias also controlled the nearby districts of Shaab and Ur, from whence they staged raids on Sunni neighborhoods; they operated out of bases in Khadimiyah and Shula in western Baghdad; they owned large swaths of terrain in Diyala province, where they were engaged in an intense war against al Qaeda; they fought each other in Basra and controlled large areas of the Shia south.

Today, al Qaeda has been driven out of Dora, Ameriya, Ghazaliya, and Adhamiya; out of Anbar almost entirely; out of the "southern belt" including the former triangle of death; out of much of Diyala; and out of most of Salah-ad-Din. Iraqi and coalition operations are underway to drive al Qaeda out of its last urban bastion in Mosul. Remaining al Qaeda groups, although still able to generate periodic spectacular attacks, are largely fragmented and their communications partially disrupted. Iraqi Security Forces have been on the offensive against Shia militias in the "five cities" area (Najaf, Karbala, Diwaniya, Hilla, and Kut) and have severely degraded militia capabilities and eliminated militia control from significant parts of this area; the attack in Basra resulted in a reduction of the militia-controlled area, including the recapture of Basra's lucrative ports by government forces; tribal movements in Basra and Nasiriya are helping the government advance and consolidate its gains against the militias; and Iraqi Security Forces, with Coalition support, are moving through parts of Sadr City house by house and taking it back from the militias.

The fall in violence in Iraq, therefore, reflects success and not failure. Enemy control of territory has been significantly reduced, and further efforts to eliminate enemy control of any territory are underway. Spikes in violence surrounding the Basra operation reflect efforts by the government to retake insurgent-held areas and are, therefore, positive (if sober) indicators.

As for the argument that this stability is based solely on the increased presence of U.S. forces, which will shortly


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end, or that it is merely a truce between the Sunni and the Shia as they wait for us to leave—we shall soon see. Reductions of U.S. forces by 25 percent are well underway. The commanding general has recommended that after we complete those reductions in July, we evaluate the durability of the current stability, and President Bush has accepted his recommendation.

■ **Representative government.** The Iraqi government is the product of two elections. The Sunni Arabs boycotted the first, with the result that Iraq's provincial councils and governors do not reflect its ethno-sectarian make-up. The second saw a large Sunni Arab turnout and the seating of a multiethnic, multisectarian government in Baghdad. The Iraqi government recently passed a law calling for provincial elections later this year, and the United Nations special envoy to Iraq, Steffan de Mistura, has been consulting with Baghdad about the details of the election, including efforts to ensure that the various committees overseeing it are not unduly influenced by militias or political parties. Surveys show that the Iraqis are nearly unanimous in their desire to vote, particularly in Sunni areas. The Anbar Awakening has turned into a political movement, introducing political pluralism into Sunni Arab politics for the first time. Similar movements, including the splintering of Moktada al-Sadr's "Sadrist Trend," are underway more haltingly among the Shia.

Each of Iraq's elections has been more inclusive than the last. Each has seen more enthusiasm for voting among all groups. Political pluralism is increasing within both sects. Whatever the popularity of the present government of Iraq, the overwhelming majority of Iraqis see elections as the correct way to choose their leaders, believe that their votes will count, and want to participate. The provincial elections this fall—and the national legislative elections next year—will be important indicators of the health of representative government in Iraq, and we should watch them closely. So far, all indications in this area are positive.

■ **Control of territory.** The restoration of large urban and rural areas formerly held by insurgents and militias to government control is a key indicator of Iraqi progress. And there are others: the Maliki government's determination to clear Basra and Sadr City of militia influence; Iraqi operations to clear Mosul of al Qaeda fighters; the dramatic growth of the Iraqi Security Forces in 2007 and the further growth underway in 2008. There is anecdotal confirmation of this progress, such as the dramatic decline in the number of illegal militia-controlled checkpoints, most of them set up in and around Baghdad in 2006 for purposes of control, extortion, and murder. Although some war critics claim that the Anbar Awakening has simply put the province into the hands of a new militia, the truth is that the first stage of the movement saw more than 10,000 Anbaris volunteer for the Iraqi Security Forces. Two divisions of the Iraqi army remain in Anbar, and they are mixed Sunni-Shia formations. The Iraqi police force in Anbar, paid for, vetted, and controlled by the Iraqi government, has also grown dramatically. The "Sons of Iraq," who are the security component of the awakening movement, are auxiliaries to these government forces, supplemented by the presence of American troops. In Baghdad's neighborhoods, Sons of Iraq are dwarfed in number by the two Iraqi army divisions stationed in the city (in addition to the mechanized division based just to the north in Taji) and the numerous police and national police formations, all supported by American combat brigades. The Iraqi government is steadily extending its control of its own territory, and has demonstrated a determination to retake insurgent-held areas even from Shia militias.

■ **Orientation toward the West.** Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited Iraq in March 2008 and was warmly received, prompting concern in the United States that the Iraqi government was tilting toward Tehran. War critics, attempting to spin the Iraqi government's offensive against Shia militias in Basra, argued that Iran "supports" both the militias and the principal Shia parties fighting them—the entire operation, they claimed, was simply "Shia infighting" among groups already devoted to Tehran.

A closer examination shows this to be false. While it is true that Iran "supports" both ISCI and Dawa, the two leading Shia parties in the government, with money, and it provides the Sadrist militia not only with money, but with lethal weapons, training, trainers, and advisers inside Iraq to support the militia's fight against the United States and the Iraqi government—nevertheless, Iran does not provide such support to the government of Iraq or to the Iraqi Security Forces, which the United States and its allies have worked hard to develop into effective fighting forces, at the behest of the United Nations and the request of the legitimate government of Iraq. This is not simply "Shia infighting" in which the United States has no stake.

More to the point, we might ask what the Iraqi government itself has done to show its preferences. It has asked the United Nations to endorse the Multinational Force mission supporting it, a mission that includes American forces—but not Iranian ones. It has requested a bilateral security agreement with the United States—and not with Iran. It has determined to purchase American weapons and equipment for its armed forces, to replace the Warsaw Pact gear it had been using—and has not requested equipment from Iran or its principal international suppliers, Russia and China. Baghdad is organizing, training, and equipping its military and police forces to be completely interoperable with the United States—and not with Iran.


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A girls' school in Baghdad's Sadr City, where Iraqi Security Forces are now taking back control from the Shia militias.

For a government accused of being in Tehran's thrall, the current Iraqi government appears to have demonstrated repeatedly a commitment to stand with the United States, at least as long as the United States stands with Iraq.

■ **An ally in the war on terror.** Al Qaeda has killed many more Iraqis than Americans. Iraq has eight army divisions—around 80,000 troops—now in the fight against al Qaeda, and another three—around 45,000 troops—in the fight against Shia extremists. Tens of thousands of Iraqi police and National Police are also in the fight. Thus, there are far more Iraqis fighting al Qaeda and Shia militias in Iraq than there are American troops there. Easily ten times as many Iraqi as Pakistani troops are fighting our common enemies. At least three times as many Iraqi soldiers and police as Afghan soldiers and police are in the fight. And many times more Iraqi troops are engaged in the war on terror than those of any other American ally. In terms of manpower engaged, and sacrifice of life and limb, Iraq is already by far America's best ally in the war on terror.

These facts will surely not put to rest the debate over definitions and measures of success in Iraq. Certainly, the American people have a right to insist that our government operate with a clear vision of success and that it develop a clear plan for evaluating whether we are moving in the right direction, even if no tidy numerical metrics can meaningfully size up so complex a human endeavor. As shown here, supporters of the current strategy do indeed have a clear definition of success, and those working to implement it are already evaluating American progress against that definition every day. It is on the basis of their evaluation that we say the surge is working.

The question Americans should ask themselves next is: Have the opponents of this strategy offered a clear definition of their own goals, along with reasonable criteria for evaluating progress toward them? Or are they simply projecting onto those who have a clear vision with which they disagree their own vagueness and confusion?

Here is a gauntlet thrown down: Let those who claim that the current strategy has failed and must be replaced lay out their own strategy, along with their definition of success, criteria for evaluating success, and the evidentiary basis for their evaluations. Then, perhaps, we can have a real national debate on this most important issue. ♦

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At the Superdome, April 11

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# Hurricane Eve Hits New Orleans

*Celebrating a decade of those revolting monologues*

**By Matt Labash**

*New Orleans*

Each of us had his own reason for coming to the Superdome on April 11-12. Renamed "Super Love," the stadium that became a national symbol for violence and neglect during Katrina was now hosting the 10-year anniversary extravaganza of V-Day, the annual vagina-themed observance to end abuse against women, the capstone of which features Eve Ensler's ubiquitous play, *The Vagina Monologues*.

Some of us probably came after we heard the ruckus that resulted when *Monologues* regular Jane Fonda dropped the c-bomb while publicizing the event on the *Today Show*. Others might have been drawn by Mayor Ray Nagin, ever game to embarrass his city, who welcomed Ensler and company by christening himself a "vagina-friendly mayor. I am in!" Still others just wanted to see Oprah, even if Oprah ended up bagging the event, leaving attendees settling for Oprah's best friend, Gayle.

But if there's one reason we all came, it was to celebrate our vaginas. Not me, necessarily. I don't have one, strictly speaking. But I know a lot of people who do. And I came to celebrate theirs.

While *The Vagina Monologues* and all its attendant hoopla is nominally about eradicating violence against women (a worthy cause, even if there's not a lot of pushback from interest groups espousing violence against women), its stated macropurpose is to reclaim the word "vagina." From whom is anyone's guess. The cult of *The Vagina Monologues* congratulates itself for erasing taboos, though anybody who's watched television in the last 15 years might fairly assume that there weren't any left. And it endeavors to transform a body part into a badge, not just something you possess, but a political proclamation.

Since the play debuted a little over a decade ago, having now been translated into 24 languages and performed in thousands of colleges and cities the world over, it has become a near article of faith among its enthusiasts that the more brusquely, frequently, and inappropriately you say "vagina," the more pro-woman you are. This weekend in New Orleans would prove no exception.

Entering the Super Love through a tunnel, you were greeted by a giant vagina. At least that's what the welcome-wagon Vagina Honor Guard—a group of lovely young ladies adorned with flowers and cowries and looking like the stars of a hippie Massengill commercial—told me that the pink backlit hulk of plastic suspended from the ceiling over the entrance was supposed to resemble. I puzzled over it a long time. Not to brag, but I've seen my fair share of vaginas. Some of them in person, even. And this didn't look familiar. I hauled out an anatomy chart from my reporter's bag. Knowing in advance that the Superdome would be transformed into a vagina, I'd brought it along in case I needed to find my way to the snack bar: *Stay straight till you get past the mons pubis, then take a left at the labia majora.* But the installation didn't have any of my favorite landmarks. It looked like something from a botched operation.

A Superdome employee, an older black gentleman, and I put our heads together, commencing a penis dialogue of sorts. I told him what we were supposed to be looking at. He cocked his head, flipping through his own mental Rolodex. "What in the hell?" he said. A member of the Vagina Honor Guard named Deborah Justice helped us out. The entire facility was supposed to be the womb, she said. And I was on the inside looking out. "Kind of like when you were born," she said. "You probably just don't remember."

There was no time to revert back to childbirth, however, as Ensler took the stage with a slew of celebrities to declare that they had "Vagina-ized the Superdome." Wearing her Linda Ronstadt pageboy, a black lacy getup, and an armor-like silver necklace that made her look like she was anticipating a battle-axe duel in a Parisian bordello, Ensler screamed this to the point of sounding as though she were about to cry. In fact, she screams/cries most things, in keeping with the shrillness of her prose style. It comes as little surprise that she once told *People* that she allows herself "grieving days," in which she can spend up to five hours sobbing in bed.

*Matt Labash is a senior writer at* The Weekly Standard.



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Initially, the floor was packed with African-American women, some of them toting kids, who'd been bused home for the event from places like Houston and Memphis, where much of the New Orleanian diaspora resides. Ensler welcomed them warmly, and related to them all the donated services from massages to juice bars to beauty makeovers to yoga instruction that were available to them in upper-level lounges. God knows the women needed it. Most of them had been to hell and back on crowded Greyhounds. One of these women told me she and her three children have lived in eight places in three states since being wiped out in the storm two and a half years ago.

Most of the New Orleans-homecoming crowd, though, seemed to disappear after the opening ceremonies, understandably preferring a day at the spa to sitting through panel discussions on "connections and parallels between our treatment of the earth and our treatment of women's bodies," or lectures by feminist legal theoreticians with enticing titles like "On Intersectionality."

The crowd that replaced them was of a more traditional cast. There were the sassy college girls, with subtle T-shirt messages such as "I love boobs," all full of vim and feeling naughty after having performed Ensler's racier monologues, like "Reclaiming C—," back home in front of God and Daddy and the Boise State student union. Then there were the lesbians, lots and lots of lesbians, with their hair long in back and short and spikey upfront, making them look like Billy Ray Cyrus's butch sister or perhaps a keytar player from an '80s New Wave band.

There was even a smattering of men. You'd see them walking mousily, trying to look unthreatening and inconspicuous. They reminded me of the guys I'd see in college who'd wear Riot Grrrl T-shirts to Take Back the Night rallies, hoping to get lucky with some emotionally souped-up coed who'd just finished bullhorning the quad that all men are rapists. (Ensler, for her part, doesn't maintain that all men are rapists, merely that "too many men are rapists.")

Making my way around the dome, I visited all the Super Love substations. There was the Intentions Yurt, an orange tent which smelled yurt-ish, for lack of a better word. Inside was a box in which women scribbled their intentions. My intention was to get a stiff drink to help me get through all their intentions, such as "I intend to laugh more" or "I intend to work everyday to remove my carbon footprint." The front flap of the yurt was an embroidered copy of Ensler's new, New Orleans-themed monologue which posits that "New Orleans is the vagina of America": "We use her to entertain us and excite us, then jealous of her power and embarrassed by our awe, we make her a whore." No word yet if Ray Nagin, America's most "vagina-friendly mayor," has recommended this to his tourism bureau.

Then it was off to Donna Karan's Urban Zen lounge, where a fleet of volunteer masseuses, aromatherapists, and yoga instructors kneaded and pulled and pressed the Vagina Warriors, as attendees were called. In one particularly intense session, I witnessed a young woman lying on her back, crying, while one of the aromatherapists lay on top of her, whispering in her ear while touching her softly.

Assuming there was some tragic story of sexual or physical abuse behind the tears, I later asked the aromatherapist what I'd just seen. Linda Zuver, who's with Young Living Essential Oils, told me that in fact it wasn't abuse, it was "ummm, an abortion." The young woman had recently had one, and the guilt from it was making her experience neck pain. But some supportive words, a sympathetic touch, and some cooling peppermint oil, and *voilà*: "Now her neck feels great!"

Next, I was off to the Red Tent, a storytelling enclosure which sat to the right of the main stage. It was elaborately decorated with overstuffed pillows and crystals and Hindu and Buddhist statuary all intended to evoke the comforting "sacred space" of a womb so that women could "tell their stories." Storytelling took about 80 minutes per session, since as one volunteer told me "women have a lot to say." I wasn't permitted into most of these sessions, since, I was told, "your testosterone would change the energy of the room."

But I was admitted to the LesBiGayTrans session headed by the actress Jennifer Beals and her castmates from the lipstick-lesbian Showtime series *The L Word*. As I attempted to enter, I was stopped and asked if I was, in fact, a lesbian. "No," I said. "But I have a few Sarah McLachlan records."

"That's good enough," said the volunteer.

I was the only man in the tent, though I can't be certain a few of the participants, after finishing their hormonal regimens, won't be joining me. Otherwise, it was a pleasant enough way to kill 80 minutes. For years, I nursed a serious crush on Beals, after she played a Pittsburgh welder/stripper in 1983's *Flashdance.* She looked resplendent this afternoon, sitting barefoot on a stool, wearing a peasant skirt and white shirt knotted at the belly.

As we all took pillows on the floor of the tent, after being commanded to shed our shoes in the "shoe circle," *The L Word* cast led the assemblage in storytelling time, which covered many issues, from drag kings to television stereotypes, but which mainly seemed to involve hot-and-bothered lesbians describing their first Sapphic experiences. I'd stopped paying attention to the ins and outs of feminism some years ago, around the time I no longer needed to pad my college GPA with gender studies classes in which I'd be forced to write essays that made use of words like "heteronormative" and "patriarchal hegemony" without irony. But


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whether this was third-wave or fourth-wave feminism—I've lost track which wave we're on—all this talk of steamy girl-on-girl action made me ready to reenlist.

Back on the main stage there were, to be sure, plenty of harrowing tales of violence against women. An array of international activists told stomach-turning anecdotes, such as those of the systematic gang rape and genital mutilation of women in the Congo. And Ensler, to her credit, regularly visits these countries and highlights the very real abuses of women around the world.

But apparently, there's a lighter side of violence against women as well, as evidenced by Sara Blakely, the spunky blonde founder of Spanx, "a hosiery line designed to promote women's comfort and confidence." She related to the crowd her own bloodcurdling tales about how she was forced to fight patriarchal hosiery manufacturers because "I didn't like the way my own butt looked in white pants." The horror.

And even Hollywood starlets have their crosses to bear. During their panel, entitled "Coming Into Your Body, Your Voice, Your Power," actresses Kerry Washington, Amber Tamblyn, Rosario Dawson, and Ali Larter encouraged young women not to buy into the beauty myths perpetuated by Hollywood films, presumably films such as *Varsity Blues*, in which Larter made her most indelible splash by wearing nothing more than a whipped-cream bikini.

Washington pondered how they could "get the respect that we deserve and love ourselves and act in a way [that gets others] to act respectful toward us." The actresses went on to complain about everything from having to wear tight clothes at auditions, to having journalists not correctly report what they eat, to having freckles airbrushed from their noses in photos, which one called "visual violence against women." It's not exactly clitoridectomies in Sudan, but all pain is relative to courageous Vagina Warriors.

Nowhere is this more evident than in *The Vagina Monologues* production itself. After two days solid of lectures and slam poets and "ecstatic dancing" stretch breaks, everyone congregated for the grand finale at the nearby New Orleans Arena, to watch stars big (Jane Fonda) and small (Didi Conn—doing some of her best work, perhaps her only work, since the '80s sitcom *Benson*) stand swathed in blood-red outfits on an overlit bare stage, prattling on about their vaginas six ways to Sunday.

The almost all-female crowd bellowed and howled and finished from memory some of Ensler's clunky, unfunny lines, as though they were the estrogenic equivalent of the meatheads who populate Andrew Dice Clay concerts. Reading from notecards, sometimes laughing at their own material, the actresses ripped through most of Ensler's greatest hits, from "Because He Liked to Look At It," about a man named Bob who obsessively looks at his lover's vagina, to "My Angry Vagina," in which a woman grouses about such injustices as tampons and cold speculums at the doctor's office.

While the audience hooted at any and all explicit references like a lesbian bachelorette party on their fifth round of cosmos down at the Gurlesque strip club, the script is coarse, witless, and unerotic in nearly every way, even when—and this isn't easy to write—my high-school crush Jennifer Beals, portraying a lesbian dominatrix, does a multi-minute reenactment of various types of female orgasm.

The play is not really anti-man, as it is often accused of being, but rather, anti-woman. It's a brand of feminism that masquerades as empowerment, when in reality it's more reductive than any patriarchal hegemony could ever dream of being.

I came away from *The Vagina Monologues* with an unexpected surprise. The play is not really anti-man, as it is often accused of being by critics, but rather, anti-woman. It's a brand of feminism that masquerades as empowerment, when in reality it's more reductive than any patriarchal hegemony could ever dream of being. In its telling, the vagina is not merely a component of the complex and wondrous ecosystem that is a woman, it is the totality of the woman. Even the crudest cad knows better and acts accordingly, if he hopes to get anywhere near the vajayjay, as Oprah calls it. Ensler and her ilk like to think they're playing in the realm of the ontological, when in actuality, they rarely transcend the gynecological.

If anything, *The Vagina Monologues* reminds me of my kids' bath time. My two young sons, as is often the case with children, are frequently fascinated with their own gadgetry. The other day, when I walked in to check on how one of their baths was proceeding, my youngest stood up in the tub, grabbed the skin of his nether-region with both hands, stretched it into a square, and said, "Hey look, Daddy, a flying squirrel!" I had to admit it bore an uncanny resemblance.

It was a good line—better than most of Ensler's, but on about the same par, sophistication-wise. There are two differences, however. The first is that my son is five. The second is that unlike Ensler, he will not receive an Obie Award or a Guggenheim Fellowship or be named one of "America's Best" by CNN or be called a "messiah" by the *New York Times* for his journey to self-discovery. Instead, he was told to dry off, get dressed, and go to bed by eight o'clock. ♦



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# Go for the Bitter Bloc

*Hillary shows McCain the path to victory over Obama*

**By Reihan Salam**

Last week's Pennsylvania primary demonstrated that Barack Obama is not unbeatable. This might sound a strange way to put it. Hasn't it *always* been true that Obama is beatable?

Well, consider an alternate reality in which Obama had won Pennsylvania. His people certainly thought long and deeply about this alternate reality—why else spend a staggering $12 million on one state's primary? Hillary Clinton would have dropped out. Obama would have shown that he *can* win white working-class votes in a big, diverse, populous state. Way back after the Iowa caucuses, he playfully observed that everywhere he goes becomes Obama country. What if, amid a deluge of ads, after spending the better part of six weeks criss-crossing Pennsylvania's white ethnic inner suburbs and rural counties, he had managed to turn *them* into Obama country? There'd be no denying that he had the political Midas touch.

The Obama campaign, a far shrewder, more effective, more creative operation than any we've seen in Democratic politics in years, didn't spend that extraordinary sum for laughs. One has to assume Obama's rapid-fire responses to Clinton's attacks on guns and security were a dry run for the general election. Yet he didn't win in Pennsylvania, even against Hillary Clinton's near-penniless campaign, full of mutinous senior advisers eager to jump ship, even with a media cheering section to urge him on.

Not only did Obama not expand beyond his core constituencies—as always, he was crushed among Catholics, an atypically big slice of Pennsylvania's Democratic electorate, and white working-class voters—he lost ground with affluent professionals, the group that has powered his historic fundraising success, with weekly churchgoers, and

*Reihan Salam is an editor at the* Atlantic *and a fellow at the New America Foundation. With Ross Douthat, he is the author of* Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream *(Doubleday), due out in June.*

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with the moderates who have until recently seen him as one of their own. He lost Greater Pittsburgh and the Philadelphia suburbs by wide margins, and he also lost the northeastern part of the state by a whopping 66 to 34 percent. In a new Brookings study of Pennsylvania's political demographics, William Frey and Ruy Teixeira identify this region, centered on Allentown, as key to the state's political future. If Pennsylvania's Northeast keeps trending Democratic, the state will become solidly blue. But if a Republican candidate can hold the line or make some modest gains with the region's white working class voters, the picture looks very different. And as it turns out, the GOP may have a candidate who can do just that in John McCain. As Hillary Clinton's campaign slow-marches to its unhappy end, she is offering lessons not only for how McCain can defeat Obama—she is pointing towards a possible bright future for the Republican brand. She's probably not thrilled about that. But before we get ahead of ourselves, it's worth considering the scale of the obstacles Republicans face.

Right now, head-to-head match-ups between McCain and Obama look encouraging for the Republican. Pollsters find the two are running neck-and-neck. This picture couldn't be more misleading, as the McCain camp has been reminding anyone who'll listen. Once the Democratic nomination is settled, there is every reason to believe McCain will fall behind. The vast majority of Clinton Democrats will rally round the flag, Obama will be able to train his fire on McCain, and a massive independent expenditure campaign designed to tie McCain to the Bush White House will get under way. Given that President Bush now has the highest disapproval ratings in the history of presidential approval ratings, and that much of McCain's strength derives from independent voters who now believe he'll take the country in a different direction, those matchup numbers could get ugly fast.

Meanwhile, the public mood is near toxic for the incumbent party. According to a new Pew Research Center survey on the middle class, 31 percent of Americans believe they are worse off than they were five years ago. Compare this with 25 percent in 1979, shortly before Ronald Reagan defeated Jimmy Carter with a campaign promise of hope and change. Only 41 percent feel better off. Among self-identified middle class voters, 79 percent are convinced it is tougher now than five years ago for middle class families to maintain their standard of living.

It's true that these numbers were fairly grim, even before President Bush's reelection: For example, only about 20 percent in 2003 rated the economy as excellent. But the ideological landscape is far less favorable to Republicans today. When Pew conducted its most recent comprehensive report on trends in political values in 2007, it found that the gap between Democratic and Republican partisan identification was a mammoth 15 percentage points, a sharp shift from parity in 2002. And as the economy flirts with recession, the social issues that supposedly drive America's Bitter Bloc into Republican arms may be overshadowed. An October 2007 survey, for example, found that 65 percent consider "Energy" (gas prices) very important to their vote, while only 22 percent felt the same way about same-sex marriage. In

GARY LOCKE

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October 2004, the numbers were 54 percent and 32 percent respectively. (And gas prices are appreciably higher today than they were last fall.)

Then there is the small matter that the Republican coalition is shrinking. In a survey released this month, Teixeira and Alan Abramowitz chronicle the long-term decline of the white working class, a decline driven in large part by education and income gains but also by sharp growth in the Latino population. When Republicans win elections, they tend to do so on the strength of supermajorities of white working class voters. Democratic success in 2006 derived not from winning these voters but merely from cutting the Republican advantage. Among non-college-educated whites in households making $30,000 to $50,000 a year, Bush won 62 percent to John Kerry's 38 percent. The same group went for Republicans in 2004 congressional voting by 22 points. Among non-college-educated whites in households making $50,000 to $75,000, Bush won by 70 percent to 29 percent, and congressional Republicans by 32 points. In the 2006 midterms, by contrast, the first group supported Republicans and Democrats equally, and the second backed Republicans by only 21 points.

*Latino activists picket for McCain in Phoenix.*

JACK KURTZ

In *Building Red America*, Thomas B. Edsall described the Republican party as a coalition of winners. Blue-collar Republicans tended to be non-college-educated women and men in intact families, who had successfully adapted to economic change and were inclined to believe that the market economy worked for them. It is easy to see how a tough economic climate will shrink the winners' circle. This is particularly true in the hard-hit Great Lakes region, where McCain has a chance to perform well against Obama. A reprise of 2006 in the form of Republican underperformance among white working-class voters would doom McCain. He needs to keep his edge with these voters well in double digits to blunt the growing strength of Republican-unfriendly constituencies like less affluent college-educated whites, unmarried women, and nonwhite voters. That is, McCain needs to win a bigger share of a shrinking slice of the electorate. That won't be easy, particularly since domestic issues aren't his strong suit, as his disappointing performance in the Michigan primary showed. If he pulls it off, however, McCain will have a shot at winning states like Pennsylvania and Michigan.

If the old coalition is shrinking, can McCain break out of the Republican demographic box by winning more nonwhite voters? He has a better chance than any other Republican. The party has performed decently with some Latino constituencies, some Asian ethnic groups, and with small but significant minorities of culturally conservative black voters, as in Ohio in 2004. But in light of Obama's popularity among black voters, it seems safe to say that McCain doesn't have much of a shot with a constituency that has long been a Democratic stronghold. As for Latinos and Asian Americans, the so-called new minorities, the challenge is vexing because these groups are so diverse, and both are subject to what demographer William Frey calls "translation gaps." States with large Latino and Asian populations don't always have large Latino and Asian electorates, thanks to disproportionately high numbers of children under 18 and foreign-born residents who haven't yet acquired citizenship.


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For example, 60 percent of Asian Americans are foreign born. Because Asian Americans tend to live in married households and have relatively high incomes, this ought to be a strong Republican constituency. That was once the case, when memories of the Cold War motivated Korean American and Vietnamese American voters to back hawkish Republicans, and it could happen again as culturally conservative foreign-born Asian Americans acquire citizenship and younger churchgoing Asian Americans reach voting age. Asian-American voters have nonetheless been trending Democratic, in no small part because they are clustered in heavily Democratic metropolitan areas. And assimilation is fast turning Asian Americans into a less rather than a more distinctive constituency from whites with similar class and educational backgrounds. You might say Asian Americans are assimilating into the Democratic-leaning tendencies of their college-educated white neighbors.

This leaves Latino voters. Writer and hip-hop historian Jeff Chang has suggested that Latino voters in California backed Clinton because they place a great deal of weight on community leaders who were courted aggressively by the Clinton machine. John McCain can't match Clinton's success in this regard, as the Latino political establishment is, with the exception of Florida's Cuban Americans, very nearly monolithically Democratic.

A number of analysts have attributed strong Latino support for Hillary Clinton to a deep-seated antagonism towards black Americans, an antagonism some Obama partisans have gone so far as to suggest has been stoked by the Clintons. There is no doubt some truth to this notion. Latinos and native-born blacks have clashed in urban politics, particularly in California where Latino political power has arguably surpassed that of black voters. But what if Latino voters are simply mirroring the preferences of similarly situated Anglo voters? Given that Latino voters by definition represent the most assimilated slice of the Latino population, it makes sense that, say, non-college-educated Latinos would parallel non-college-educated whites in preferring Clinton to Obama. And if that's true, it suggests that the demographic decline of the white working class is an illusion—it will be remade as an Anglo-Latino white working class, just as conceptions of whiteness grew to include previous waves of immigrants. Latino distinctiveness will likely endure on certain issues, particularly on immigration. Yet that distinctiveness will fade.

In a sense, Hillary Clinton's coalition of white working class and Latino voters represents a better path for the Democratic party's future than Barack Obama's coalition of social liberals and black voters, which, as John Judis has noted, resembles nothing so much as George McGovern's losing coalition of 1972. Granted, there are far more college-educated liberals now than there were a generation ago. But here's the thing—the McGovern coalition included *all* minorities, as though minority status were defining and rigid. To the extent Latino voters can be pried loose from neo-McGovernism, the whole enterprise collapses.

In a sense, Hillary Clinton's coalition of white working class and Latino voters represents a better path for the Democratic party's future than Barack Obama's coalition of social liberals and black voters, which, as John Judis has noted, resembles nothing so much as George McGovern's losing coalition of 1972. Granted, there are far more college-educated liberals now than there were a generation ago.

But it is by no means obvious that McCain can pry Latino voters lose, particularly in light of the tarnished state of the Republican brand. McCain broke with conservative Republicans to embrace a comprehensive immigration reform, but he's been forced to soft-pedal the issue. Moreover, he will never win Latino voters in an immigration liberalization bidding war with Democrats. Instead of focusing on immigration as such, McCain needs to appeal to Latinos as members of a broad, pan-ethnic group of working class strivers. In doing so, he could remove places like Nevada, Florida, and New Mexico from the swing state column and improve his standing in increasingly blue-trending Colorado. McCain's balanced and measured plan to tackle the mortgage crisis, his call for doubling the tax exemption for dependents, and his proposal for delivering more affordable health care all represent a promising start. But he needs to weave together these and other proposals into a compelling narrative that goes beyond rewarding our guys and punishing yours.

It's a tall order. Still, if McCain manages to pull off a victory, Republicans will owe a debt to the path blazed by the Hillary Clinton campaign in Pennsylvania—not that they would ever thank such an unlikely benefactor, and not that she would ever want to be thanked. ♦



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# The Media Builds a Monument to Itself

## By Andrew Ferguson

If Walter Cronkite's mom was going to put together a scrapbook of her son's career—well, it would be a miracle, because she'd be about 125 years old by now. But if she did, I doubt that it would contain more admiring images of the former CBS newsreader than you'll find in the Newseum, the new journalism museum that held its boffo grand opening this month in Washington, D.C. Cronkite is everywhere in the Newseum. He hovers over it like a guardian angel, or a patron saint. You can't turn around without hearing his phlegmy baritone rumbling out from a hidden speaker or see some grainy footage of him announcing President Kennedy's death or wiping his eyes at the moon landing or definitively pronouncing the Vietnam war a "stalemate."

And that's the way it is—at the Newseum, anyway. But why?

I don't know how the Newseum's curators would explain Cronkite's omnipresence (I do know they would use the word "iconic"), but I have an explanation of my own. Cronkite is a kind of synecdoche for American journalism. His career traces the arc of the news business over the last 70 years, from the grubby, slightly disreputable trade of the early 20th century to the highly serious, obsessively self-regarding profession it has become, here in the first decade of the twenty-first. A college drop-out, plucky but unimaginative, Cronkite knocked around a series of newspaper jobs in the 1930s, followed the troops into Normandy, worked for a wire service after the war, and filed workmanlike copy all the while that was notable for nothing in particular. Then came television, and celebrity, which he acquired thanks to the unprecedented reach of mass media

*Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at* The Weekly Standard.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARNOLD ROTH



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*And that's the way it is . . . on Pennsylvania Avenue.*

rather than through any peculiar merit of his own. From the 1960s onward Cronkite was transformed by some mysterious process into a figure implausibly larger than a newspaper hack, a spiritual force as imposing and weightless as a dirigible. He was an oracle, a teller of truths, the conscience of a nation, "the most trusted man in America."

American journalism followed the same trajectory into self-importance, borne aloft on the same draft of hot air and vanity. Our terrific country offers lots of ways to make a living, but with the possible exceptions of movie acting and architecture, only modern journalism would have the nerve to celebrate itself with something as gaudy and improbable as the Newseum. The Freedom Forum, a nonprofit foundation seeded with money from the Gannett newspaper chain, conceived and underwrote the museum for $450 million, and a half dozen newspaper and media companies kicked in another $122 million to pay for exhibits and other trimmings. That's $572 million—a lavish sum by any measure. It's especially impressive from an industry that is, according to its own incessant complaints, going broke.

The journalists and former journalists who run the Newseum swear it was worth every centime. It sits on one of the choicest pieces of real estate in the country, the last parcel of undeveloped land on Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and the White House. Directly to the south is the majestic West Wing of the National Gallery of Art; to the east is the Canadian embassy, which was the



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most pointlessly bombastic building in downtown Washington until the Freedom Forum hired the semi-celebrity architect James Polshek to design the Newseum. In his promotional materials, Polshek has declared his building "a functionally cohesive, meaningful and memorable icon." (It's an instant icon—an insticon.) The architect has been insisting publicly that his design was inspired by the unique mission of the Newseum and by the particular qualities of journalism, but anyone familiar with his other famous buildings—the Clinton library in Little Rock, for example—will see precisely the same elements here, deployed to the same effect: the staircases encased in glass, the abrupt shifts in cladding, the enormous glass front wall stripped with thin metallic fins, the acres of blond wood, the tubular trim, the skylights, and, most important of all, a soaring atrium that's perfect for cocktail parties and fundraising dinners. If you know Polshek's buildings, in other words, you know that this is just another Polshek building. I wonder if he thinks the folks at the Freedom Forum won't notice.

**The actual mouse pad used by Peter Jennings is down the case from a red sweater that Helen Thomas wore to a presidential press conference, across from a notebook jotted in by the 'Newsweek' reporter Michael Isikoff during the Lewinsky scandal.**

The building's one genuinely unique feature—no one else will do it again, now that it's been done once—is on the exterior: a 75-foot-high slab of Tennessee marble projected from the building's front. On it are etched, in letters several feet high, the 45 words of the First Amendment. Putting it there was an aggressive act, a lapel-grabber—thrust over the Avenue, it's unignorable, literally in your face. Yet the Newseum staffers are inordinately proud of it. "If all we had of the building was that wall," the museum's director Charles Overby told a press preview the other day, "then the building would have still been worth it."

Does he mean he'd be willing to spend $572 million on a large slab of marble? Under the circumstances overstatement is probably unavoidable. The ostentatious display of the First Amendment, as though it were a structural element of the building itself, is in keeping with the museum's theme: the subtle conflation of the American news business with the constitutional principle of a free press, as though the one were the inevitable, precious fruit of the other. The theme is hammered home inside the museum, too, though it sometimes gets lost in the conventions of modern museum design. "We wanted the most interactive museum in the world," Overby said, "the most technologically advanced museum in the world. We wanted more flat screens than anyone. In attracting people here to learn about a free press, we wanted to give the visitors a 'Wow' experience." The price of admission is $13 for children, $20 for adults. Wow.

The wow experience has now become mandatory in the design of modern museums. A museum visitor no longer just visits a museum and sees stuff: He is given a *visitor experience*—a sequence of sensations that can be packaged, advertised, and controlled by the curators. If the *visitor experience* is *interactive*, that's terrific; if it's *immersive*—well, you're going to have one wowed visitor on your hands. For the great enemy of the museum designer today is not ignorance but boredom. Like most public institutions in American life, from movies to libraries to baseball parks, museums are designed with the primary goal of seizing and holding the attention of a slightly hyperactive male adolescent, that cheerful, vacant fellow who has just clambered down from the school bus and has detached himself from the ear buds of his iPod and is in danger of growing fidgety from the sudden lack of stimulation. His discomfort must be avoided at all costs. Sometimes I picture the entire educo-entertainment industry as one of those villagers in the old horror movie *Children of the Damned*, utterly terrified of offending the alien children lest they turn their scary X-ray eyes on them and . . . *poof!* Displease the kids and your museum (movie, theme park, retail store, school) is a goner.

In the Newseum, therefore, the stimulation doesn't end. The cacophony arising from the various media—audio and visual—is inescapable. Those flat screen TVs that Overby coveted do indeed pop up everywhere. Two of the video screens, one in the lobby, another in the appropriately named Big Screen Theater, must be among the largest in the world, so preposterously big that their images are impossible to absorb from any point closer than the length of a football field. Other attractions allow kids to "report a story" by interacting with software in a kiosk, play a computer game that lets them pretend they're photojournalists, and, for an additional fee, get themselves filmed with a microphone standing in front of a picture of the White House or Capitol building. There are 15 theaters in all, running 120 new short films; among the dozen or so I've seen, Walter Cronkite appears in all but two. The


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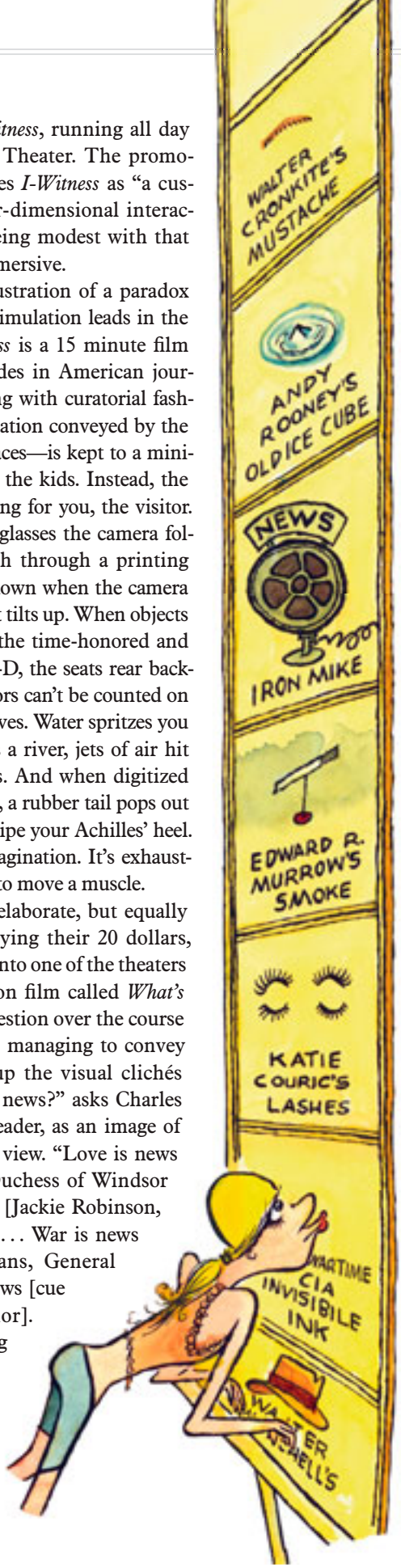
signature feature is *I-Witness*, running all day long in the Annenberg Theater. The promotional literature describes *I-Witness* as "a customized, high-tech, four-dimensional interactive feature." They're being modest with that *interactive*. Really, it's immersive.

It's also a perfect illustration of a paradox of the digital age: Overstimulation leads in the end to passivity. *I-Witness* is a 15 minute film dramatizing three episodes in American journalism history. In keeping with curatorial fashion, the historical information conveyed by the movie—names, dates, places—is kept to a minimum to avoid confusing the kids. Instead, the technology does everything for you, the visitor. After you don your 3-D glasses the camera follows a roller-coaster path through a printing press, and the seats dip down when the camera dips down and up when it tilts up. When objects fly out of the screen, in the time-honored and never-old technique of 3-D, the seats rear backward, as though the visitors can't be counted on to rear backward themselves. Water spritzes you when the camera crosses a river, jets of air hit you during windy scenes. And when digitized rats run across the screen, a rubber tail pops out from below the seat to swipe your Achilles' heel. Nothing is left to the imagination. It's exhausting, and you haven't had to move a muscle.

Other films are less elaborate, but equally uninformative. After paying their 20 dollars, visitors are maneuvered into one of the theaters and shown an orientation film called *What's News?* It answers that question over the course of nine minutes without managing to convey a fact, though it piles up the visual clichés like cordwood. "What's news?" asks Charles Osgood, the CBS newsreader, as an image of Cronkite shimmers into view. "Love is news [footage of Duke and Duchess of Windsor etc.]. . . . Firsts are news [Jackie Robinson, Sandra Day O'Connor]. . . . War is news [goose-stepping Prussians, General Pershing]. . . . Hate is news [cue Hitler and Bull Connor]. . . . Life is news [gurgling babies and, weirdly, birth control pills]. . . ." The personages and events fade in and out without any attempt to identify them, as if




today's school children could recognize Wallis Simpson. But information—ironically enough for a museum dedicated to news—is not the point. When the lights come up the visitor has no idea what journalists are good for, but he has imbibed the vague sense that journalism, whatever it is, must be a portentous enterprise.

The notion builds. An exhibit on the history of journalism amasses a riot of artifacts and places them helter-skelter in long glass cases, glowing in a darkened room. First we see a dangling press pass and a cassette audio tape: the very press pass worn in 2004 by a reporter for the *Hattiesburg American* whose tape of an off-the-record talk by Antonin Scalia was briefly confiscated by cops. That's the tape, right there. The actual mouse pad used by Peter Jennings is down the case from a red sweater that Helen Thomas wore to a presidential press conference, across from a notebook jotted in by the *Newsweek* reporter Michael Isikoff during the Lewinsky scandal. A TV screen hovering above a door from the Watergate office building shows footage of Walter Cronkite.

An old typewriter is identified as the real typewriter used by Al Neuharth, founder—coincidentally—of the Freedom Forum. Elsewhere is the tape recorder Susan Stamberg lugged around during the early days of NPR. An entire corner of the museum is given over to a shrine to the TV personality Edward R. Murrow: Behind a wall of glass sits the sacred desk, the passport, the war uniform, the trunk that was once opened by his hands, and upon which, perhaps, his bottom once rested. There's also a teletype used by Walter Cronkite. The history of journalism culminates in the final display, which shows—you may now slit my throat—the slippers once worn by the blogger Wonkette. While she blogged.

The sanctification of journalism and journalists reaches its climax in a hall of martyrs called the Journalists Memorial. It holds a series of glass panels listing the names of 1,843 journalists who died on the job. Again the criteria for inclusion are wide open, taking in both Elijah Lovejoy, who was murdered by a mob for publishing his newspaper, and the TV reporter David Bloom, who died in Iraq of a blood clot. Reminders of journalism's dangers are placed throughout the museum as spooky *memento mori*: a shrapnel-riddled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van used by photographers in Bosnia, Daniel Pearl's laptop, Bob Woodruff's flak jacket, the car that carried the newspaper reporter Don Bolles, blown up by the Arizona mafia in 1976.

For the unimaginably vast majority of journalists, of course, journalism is as dangerous as bagging groceries at Whole Foods. But these scattered totems of danger and violence have the effect of elevating journalism in glamour and importance. The visitor is left to wonder: What are these guys doing that's so dangerous? Why are people trying to kill them?

**All that the Newseum embodies—the sanctimony, the constitutional preening, the bogus intimations of danger, the religious veneration of saints and their relics—can be thought of as a defense mechanism. Journalism, seen plain, is not a terribly impressive line of work.**

The Newseum, again like most contemporary museums, is subliterate—it communicates to the visitor more through visual than verbal cues—but as you walk around you can't miss several aphorisms etched in marble, and these serve as an answer to such questions.

NEWS, AT ITS BEST, REVEALS THE TRUTH.

THE FREE PRESS IS THE CORNERSTONE OF DEMOCRACY.

PEOPLE HAVE A NEED TO KNOW. JOURNALISTS HAVE A RIGHT TO TELL.

THE SLOGANS CARRY ALL THE SUBTLETY OF POSTERS AT A REEDUCATION CAMP. TOGETHER WITH THE SLAB OF MARBLE OUT FRONT, THEY DRILL HOME THE NEWSEUM'S CONTROLLING IDEA: ANOINTED BY THE FOUNDING FATHERS, THE NEWS BUSINESS IS A TRADE APART, SOMETHING UNIQUELY PRECIOUS. IT'S NOT JUST THE RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH THAT'S SACRED, BUT THE CONTEMPORARY JOURNALISM INDUSTRY ITSELF, ALONG WITH THE PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS THAT WORK IN IT—THE PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS THAT THE NEWSEUM CELEBRATES, ALONG WITH THE FIRST AMENDMENT, UNTIL THE PRINCIPLE AND THE PROFESSIONALS BECOME ONE AND THE SAME, DESERVING OF EQUAL REVERENCE.

THIS IS A TRICK WE SEE ALL THE TIME IN WASHINGTON. HERE BUSINESSES TRY DESPERATELY TO CONFLATE THEIR OWN INTEREST WITH THE HIGHEST CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES, SO THAT ANY SLIGHT DEALT TO AN INDUSTRY IS PORTRAYED AS AN injury to freedom itself. Tax the widget makers, and their Washington trade association will issue studies proving that widget taxes are an assault on the right to private property. Occasionally, the industries have a point. With the contemporary news industry, though, the opposite argument is easier to make—especially in the case, for example, of the Gannett newspaper chain, which unofficially sponsored the Newseum and furnished its top officeholders. Gannett is infamous for its bureaucratic lack of imagination, its limp editorial pages, its whoring after political fashion, and especially its predatory business tactics, which have swallowed up dozens of worthy competitors. If Gannett went out of business tomorrow, freedom of expression would probably be enhanced rather than diminished.

Still, I prefer to think of all that the Newseum embodies—the sanctimony, the constitutional preening, the bogus intimations of danger, the religious veneration of saints and their relics—as a defense mechanism. Journalism, seen plain, is not a terribly impressive line of work. Some people do things, other people watch people do things. The news business is for people of the second sort. It's a grubby game. What do journalists do? They call people on the phone, they ask questions, they talk, they type, they read newspapers and magazines and boring government documents, they type some more, they go to one place or another to look at something or other, they jot in their notebooks, they type some more, they think a little, they pause for a minute to sip coffee before they go back to typing. The dough's not very good. The hours are erratic. Most of your colleagues are slobs. You'll never have a proper office unless you become an editor. Your fellow citizens assume you're an arrogant ass.

We should be forgiven if, in compensation, we exaggerate our own importance. We daydream: If this not-very-interesting trade can be elevated into a *profession*, made to seem dangerous and profound, a delicate flower of the timeless principles of self-government, blessed by patron saints like Cronkite and Murrow and even Thomas Jefferson, then maybe we're not in such a grubby business after all.

Hence the Newseum. It's pretentious and absurd, but it's poignant, too, and, in its way, kind of inspiring. The Newseum is a proof of the inextinguishable hope that forever rises in the breast of every journalist, the long-shot bet that if we just keep asking questions, if we just keep talking and scribbling away, there will always be an audience that needs us, and always someone willing to pay—if not $572 million, then at least 20 bucks a head. ♦



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# Greek Bearing Gift

*Constantine Cavafy, the tortured bard of Alexandria.*

**BY JOHN SIMON**

Is there a poet more translated into English than the Alexandrian Greek Constantine Cavafy? Rainer Maria Rilke comes closest, and behind him Pablo Neruda. This despite modern Greek being a language much less known abroad than German or Spanish. Even his name had to be adapted by himself for us foreigners into C.P. Cavafy from the Greek Konstantinos Petrou Kabaphes, which would fall like lead on Greekless ears.

**The Canon**
*The Original One Hundred and Fifty-Four Poems*
by Constantine Cavafy
Translated by Stratis Haviaras
Center for Hellenic Studies,
465 pp., $24.95

Yet Cavafy exists in eight more or less complete English versions, the six in my possession still in print, the most recent, Stratis Haviaras's *The Canon* my subject here. Cavafy's influence on Anglophone literati has been impressive, as several have acknowledged in writing. Consider the roster: E.M. Forster, W.H. Auden, Lawrence Durrell, Stephen Spender, James Merrill, Paul Muldoon, Christopher Middleton, Peter Porter, Roy Fuller, Rachel Hadas, and Duane Michaels. I would like to add France's Marguerite Yourcenar, painting's David Hockney, and South Africa's J.M. Coetzee, whose novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* takes its title from Cavafy's best known poem. In Greece, every major poet is in Cavafy's debt, notably the Nobel laureate George Seferis and the remarkable Iannis Ritsos.

What makes Cavafy internationally famous? (Note also that Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* contains a goodly number of quotations from him.) To begin with, whatever the subject of his poems, their tone, the sensibility behind them, is a thoroughly cosmopolitan one, as Cavafy's life bears out.

Born into a prosperous Greek Orthodox merchant family in Alexandria in 1863, he was the youngest of nine children. In 1872, upon his father's death, the family, in straitened circumstances, moved to Liverpool, where the import-export firm had an office; after three years, another move took them to London for a further four. The company went bust, but not before Constantine developed considerable skill in English, adopted English manners and, apparently, even a lifelong slight British accent in his Greek.

For the next five years mother Charikleia and several of her brood lived in Alexandria, where Constantine attended a school of commerce. Political unrest and British bombardment drove Charikleia and a few sons to Constantinople and the home of her rich, civilized diamond-merchant father.

In England Cavafy read Shakespeare, Wilde, and Browning, whose dramatic monologues he later emulated. In Constantinople (1882-85) he got deeply involved with Hellenistic and Byzantine history as well as the Greek classics. Good at languages, he read Dante in Italian and perused much contemporary English and French poetry, notably the Parnassians and Symbolists.

Back in Alexandria from 1885, he continued to write poetry in Greek and prose in English. He switched citizenship from British to Greek, and kicked around in various professions—journalist, broker, Cotton Stock Exchange employee, and, finally, apprentice in the Irrigation Office of the Ministry of Public Works, where he was to become a clerk for 30 years until his retirement.

With various brothers (most of whom died young), Constantine did some traveling, sometimes to Athens, but also to London and Paris. On top of Latin and classical Greek, he was fluent in English, French, Italian, and Arabic, and so useful to the Irrigation Office as to earn afternoons off for the stock exchange and homosexual pursuits. He did well at both, and his salary grew as well, though he remained, as a Greek citizen, in title only "provisional clerk."

In a diary, Cavafy described desperate but futile attempts to rid himself of his erotic passions. By 1903, on the basis of magazine publication, his poems were becoming noticed and written about in Greece. Having previously lived with his cherished mother, upon her death he moved in with his brother Paul. When Paul moved to Paris in 1908, Cavafy became sole owner of the modest flat. During World War I he met E.M. Forster, who made him known to English writers and readers.

*Constantine Cavafy, 1926*

By 1924 there were intense discussions about Cavafy's work in Athens

*John Simon writes about theater for* Bloomberg News.



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and Alexandria, T.S. Eliot published him in the *Criterion*, Dimitri Mitropoulos was setting him to music, and he became friends with Nikos Kazantzakis. Come 1928, much was published about him everywhere; the Italian Futurist Marinetti called on him and, later, wrote about him. The next year Forster returned to Alexandria, and sang his praises in interviews.

In 1932 Cavafy developed throat cancer. A tracheotomy in Athens yielded a brief reprieve, but lost him the capacity of speech. Bedridden for months back in Alexandria, he was writing poems to the last. Refusing last rites at first, he finally accepted them "with compunction." His last gesture was to draw a symbolic circle with a dot inside as, having reached the biblical three score and ten, he died from a stroke on his seventieth birthday, April 29, 1933.

Cavafy usually wrote about 70 poems a year and destroyed all but four or five. His total output was about 300, printed on broadsheets for his friends' approval, or published in slim chapbooks—never in book form. Near death, he approved 154 for book publication; printed posthumously in 1935, they are known as "the Canon." Other poems, now known as "Unpublished" or "Hidden," he did preserve, still others he repudiated, and some he did not finish. All have been published, which has been variously saluted and deplored. There are English translations of most of these, one even of all.

Modern Greek is twofold: the formal *katharevussa* or purist, long used in journalism, literature, and politics; and the popular speech, *demotike*, which eventually prevailed in literature as well. Cavafy created his own blend of the two, sometimes quite unusual and even ungrammatical, but exerting a peculiar charm. As for his subjects, they were designated by himself as historical, philosophical, or sensual (hedonistic)—these last-named always homosexual. There was quite a bit of overlapping: Greek spelling, itself divergent, has been rendered in English in Hellenic or Latinately Anglicized forms—e.g., Phoibos or Phoebus—causing confusing inconsistency.

*Port of Alexandria, ca. 1900*

Cavafy famously remarked, "I am a poet-historian. I could never write a novel or a play, but I feel in me a hundred and twenty-five voices that tell me I could write history. But now there is no more time."

The historical poems, which preponderate, are of two kinds: about actual historical figures, although often minor ones, or fictional characters that nevertheless compellingly evoke past ages and events. The philosophical poems feature cogent speculations of existential, occasionally religious or mythological, nature. The sensual ones deal with fulfilled or unfulfilled physical relationships, often mere pickups, very rarely love, and then almost always one-sided.

The chief historic periods are the Hellenistic (4th century to 1st century B.C.); the Roman (1st century B.C. to 4th century A.D.); and the late Byzantine (11th to 14th centuries A.D.). The locales are the Syria of the Seleucids, with their capital in Antioch, and the Egypt of the Ptolemies, with their capital in Alexandria; but also lesser kingdoms of Asia Minor, as well as mainland Greece and Macedon, all eventually conquered by Rome, except for Byzantium, which fell to the Turks.

The sensual poems are almost always memory poems, such as "Their Beginnings," as translated by Haviaras:

*Their illicit wanton lust has been satisfied.*
*Rising from the bed, they dress quickly,*
*not speaking.*
*They leave the house furtively: first one,*
*then the other;*
*as they stroll a bit uneasily down the*
*street, it's as though*
*they imagine that some aspect of them*
*betrays*
*the sort of bed they lay upon just minutes*
*ago.*
*And yet how the artist has profited from*
*all this:*
*tomorrow, or the day after, or years from*
*now, he'll write*
*the crucial verses that had their begin-*
*nings here.*

Some Cavafian characteristics are apparent. There is no reliance on metaphor, simile, or other tropes. The meter, even in English, is chiefly iambic and the lines (at least in the Greek) are usually of 12 to 17 syllables. Outspokenness is evident. Though not here, Cavafy sometimes rhymes, which Haviaras (unlike most translators) often renders in rhyme. What cannot be rendered is Cavafy's idiosyncratic, purist/demotic language and the verbal music at which he excelled.

In the same vein, consider "On the Ship."

LL / ROGER VIOLLET / GETTY IMAGES



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*It resembles him, of course,*
*this modest penciled drawing.*

*Quickly sketched on the deck of the ship,*
*on an enchanted afternoon,*
*the Ionian sea all about us.*

*It resembles him, but I remember him as more attractive.*
*He was voluptuous to an almost painful degree,*
*and this animated his expression.*
*Now that my soul conjures him out of time*
*he certainly appears to be more attractive.*

*Out of time. All these things are really quite old—*
*the drawing, and the ship, and the afternoon.*

How that last line resonates, even in English!

About another relationship, Cavafy writes with medial breaks as in some old Greek hymns:

*. . . perhaps it was Fate*
*become an artist, that required them to part before*
*time had changed them, before their feelings failed;*
*so that now one for the other will always remain as though*
*he were still a handsome young man of twenty-four.*

In very cosmopolitan Alexandria (Egyptian, British, Greek, French), homosexuality was rampant. As most likely the first candidly homosexual modern poet, Cavafy gained a sizable constituency, but historicism also has attracted numerous readers fascinated by the past. A famous poem, "The God Abandons Antony," has Mark Antony, after his defeat at Actium, gazing out of a window and imagining Dionysus and his revelers leaving the Roman's adopted city. Here is how it ends:

*listen closely with your heart, not*
*with cowardly pleas and protests;*
*hear, as a last pleasure, those sounds,*
*the delightful music of the invisible procession,*
*and bid farewell to the Alexandria you are losing.*

Or consider "Nero's Tenure," which begins: "*Nero wasn't particularly troubled to / learn of the Delphic oracle's pronouncement: / 'Watch out for the age of seventy-three.' / There's more than enough time to enjoy himself*." The poem then evokes some of the young emperor's pleasures and hopes, and ends: "*So it goes for Nero. While in Spain, the general Galba / clandestinely marshals and trains his troops, / a very old man of seventy-three*." This is a good example of Cavafy's celebrated irony, informing so much of the poetry.

Cavafy learned a lot from historians such as Plutarch, and old Alexandrian epigrammatist poets such as Callimachus and Meleager. But he was always idiosyncratic, albeit often under an alias. So in "Orophernes," a poem about a Cappadocian king, we read: "*In his heart he was ever an Asiatic, / but in his conduct and discourse a Greek*," which stands for Cavafy's private hedonism and public discretion. A similar duality pervades "Myres; Alexandria, 340 A.D.," which dramatically contrasts Alexandria's simultaneous paganism and Christianity.

Perhaps even more effective are the philosophical poems, such as "Ithaka." Here Cavafy uses Odysseus' long homeward journey as a symbol for Everyman's progress through life. He warns: "*take care not to travel too hastily*" even if Ithaka "*is the goal of your journey*," supposed to be "*always in your thoughts*." But you are not to expect riches when reaching the home shores of old age:

*Ithaka bestowed upon you the marvelous journey:*
*if not for her you would never have set out.*
*But she has nothing left to impart to you.*

*If you find Ithaka wanting, it's not that she's deceived you.*
*That you have gained so much wisdom and experience*
*will have told you everything of what such Ithakas mean.*

As D.J. Enright correctly observed in *Conspirators and Poets*, Cavafy "is a major poet. . . . He deserves more than one translation." The various translations all have their merits. Take that closing line of "Ithaka." In Rae Dalven, it is "you must surely have understood by then what Itahacas mean." In Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard: "you will have understood by then what Ithacas mean." In Aliki Barnstone: "you understand by now what Ithakas mean." Theoharis C. Theoharides introduces commas with ironic implication: "you will have understood, by then, what these Ithacas mean." Evangelos Sachperoglou is chattier: "you will have come to know what Ithacas really mean."

Indeed, every English edition of Cavafy's poems has its particular virtue. John Mavrogordato had an excellent introduction by Rex Warner. Dalven has a much-quoted introduction by Auden, as well as her exemplary biography of the poet. Barnstone features a good foreword by Gerald Stern, and though all versions have explanatory notes, hers are particularly helpful, as in her discussion of transliteration. Theoharides is the only one who includes every available scrap of Cavafy. Sachperoglou has the most extensive and informative historical-critical introduction (by Peter Mackridge) and handy chronologies of both the poems and Cavafy's life, which I have much relied on.

Stratis Haviaras has some, though not all, of the rhyming as well as the Greek text on facing pages; some other translations have had one or the other, but not both. Although Seamus Heaney's Foreword here is too skimpy, Manuel Savidis's Introduction is helpful, though it contains one curious slip, making 1963 50 rather than (correctly) 30 years after the poet's death. The "Translator's Preface" usefully explains Haviaras's methodology.

How do I rate this newest translation? Let us look at Haviaras's version of Cavafy's most famous poem, "Waiting for the Barbarians." It is in dialogue form, and begins in his rendering (I omit the blank spaces between line clusters):

*What are we waiting for, gathered here in the agora?*
*The barbarians are supposed to show up today.*
*Why is there such indolence in the senate?*
*Why are the senators sitting around, making no laws?*


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*Because the barbarians are to show up today.*

*Why should the senators trouble themselves with laws?*
*When the barbarians arrive, they'll do the legislating.*

Thereupon the poem brilliantly evokes various attitudes: the emperor, ceremonially attired, holding a scroll of tribute; the consuls and praetors in their most opulent finery; the great orators curiously absent. The expectant crowd is "suddenly ill at ease":

*Why are the streets and the squares all at once empty,*
*as everyone heads for home, lost in their thoughts?*
*Because it's night now and the barbarians haven't shown up.*
*And there are others, just back from the borderlands,*
*who claim that the barbarians no longer exist.*
*What in the world will we do without barbarians?*
*Those people would have been a solution, of sorts.*

This strikes me as solid, although it must be conceded that Havarias's English is occasionally faulty. So we get a person's "behaviors" in the plural, "work as best as you can," "he could care less," "this one gone waste," "he lay the flowers," and a few others.

But on the positive side there is also the handsome, generous-sized, typeface, and Haviaras captures what Heaney rightly calls the "indefinable, locked-up quality of Cavafy's gaze." Which means, as Heaney further notes, Cavafy's going toward what the gaze focuses on "calmly and clearsightedly, more coroner than commentator, equally disinclined to offer blame or grant the benefit of the doubt." Sir Maurice Bowra, in the creative experiment put it this way: "He pierced through the local and ephemeral qualities of a situation to its permanent character and created not a record of history but an imaginative criticism of life."

As I see it, Cavafy has managed the neat trick of transmuting terse, unadorned lines into, as he says in a poem, "utter feeling." ♦

# Like Lost Sheep

## *These days, the Episcopal missionaries are from Africa.*

**BY ROBERT W. PRICHARD**

This is the most recent in a growing genre of books that seek to explain the current feuding in the worldwide Anglican Communion, of which the Episcopal Church in the United States is a part. Miranda Hassett's particular interest is in the alliances made between conservative Episcopalians and former Episcopalians here and Anglicans in Africa. Recent volumes on this subject include Philip Jenkins's *The Next Christendom* (2002), Ian Douglas and Paul Zahl's *Understanding the Windsor Report* (2005), and Ephraim Radner and Philip Turner's *The Fate of Communion* (2006). Hassett notes her indebtedness to Douglas in her acknowledgments, and is critical of Jenkins's work. That is to say, she approaches the current debate in the Episcopal Church from a liberal perspective.

**Anglican Communion in Crisis**
*How Episcopal Dissidents and Their African Allies Are Reshaping Anglicanism*
by Miranda K. Hassett
Princeton, 320 pp., $39.50

Although she acknowledges that a wide variety of issues are involved in current church feuding, she uses attitudes on the appropriateness of the ordination of sexually active gays and lesbians as the line of demarcation between what she identifies as the "conservative" and "liberal/moderate" blocs in the Episcopal Church.

This means of identification is based upon a set of assumptions about which she is clear. As in almost any public debate, it is only a relatively small percentage of Episcopalians who actually make open declarations of their views on the disputed matters. She concludes, however, that "the leaders in the Episcopal GLBT rights group, Integrity, and a few outspoken bishops, other church leaders, and scholars" who are activists "for the full inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) Episcopalians" represent "a position with the general support of a majority of Episcopalians." In contrast, she reckons that "most of those who hold strong conservative views of homosexuality" are members of congregations in "the conservative camp" composed of parishes that have taken explicit stances against the ordination of gays and lesbians.

This assumption is critical, if Hassett wishes to speak of a "liberal/moderate majority," which she will do later in the book. For as recent polling data (which may not have been available to her at the time that she wrote) suggests, only a relatively small percentage of Episcopalians actually identify their congregations as "predominantly liberal." The 2005 "Faith Communities Today Survey" of 4,102 Episcopal congregations, commissioned by the Episcopal Church's Congregational Development office, found that only 8 percent of respondents characterized their congregations as "predominantly liberal" and only 22 percent suggested that their congregations were "somewhat liberal." In contrast, 18 percent responded that their congregations were "predominantly conservative," 25 percent said that they were "somewhat conservative," and 27 percent characterized their congregations as "in the middle." Thus it is only by classifying the "generally nonactivist, majority of

*Robert W. Prichard, the Arthur Lee Kinsolving professor of Christianity in America at the Virginia Theological Seminary, is the author of* A History of the Episcopal Church.



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the Episcopal Church's membership" as aligned with the activist leadership that one can posit a "liberal/moderate" majority.

We may have grounds for questioning Hassett's assumptions about the attitudes of the silent majority in the Episcopal Church, but not for questioning the seriousness with which she goes about studying the presumed minority of Episcopalians and former Episcopalians who oppose the program for full inclusion. She spent four months at "a parish in the southeastern United States that broke from the Episcopal Church and placed itself under the authority of the archbishop of Rwanda" and "almost six months in central Uganda" at Uganda Christian University, an Anglican university with strong ties to conservative Episcopalians in the United States.

It is clear that she listened carefully to those whom she met, and did not succumb to what she recognizes to be liberal stereotypes about conservative Anglicans and Africa. After serious engagement with church members at her two research sites, examination of the charges and countercharges being made in the current debate, and careful study of the literature on globalization theory, Hassett reaches some interesting and carefully nuanced conclusions.

She concludes that the affiliation of her field site in the South with the Church in Rwanda was more than a simple paper relationship. She found it to have a positive and significant effect on members of the congregation. She writes that, although her analysis

> reveals some of the limits of transformation wrought by these new relationships [between the American parish and Rwanda] those limitations do not negate the real and transformative impact of this globalization process. Many conservative Episcopalians have genuinely come to see the world in a new way, with greater interests in the global South and greater respect for the wisdom and resourcefulness of Southern Christians.

She notes that the relationship has some positive impact on the African side as well. As a result of their contacts with American conservatives, African Anglicans have found "a new way of thinking of Africa in relation to the United States. This is the challenging and exciting message that Africa is superior to America in certain ways and that Africans have something to teach American Christians."

*The ordination of archbishops Atwood and Murdoch, Nairobi, 2007*

AFP PHOTO / SIMON MAINA

Hassett qualifies both of these judgments, noting that conservative Anglicans in the United States retain some negative stereotypes about Africa and that some Africans recognize problems with the idea of African superiority. Nevertheless, the picture Hassett paints is, in large measure, positive: The alliance of African Anglicans and American conservatives is transformative in ways that she regards as primarily good.

In contrast, Hassett can be critical of the attitudes of liberal Episcopalians. She suggests that they rely upon a vision of the natural affinity of liberal American activists and Christians in the developing world that is based on "the bias toward the Left in the scholarly literature on global movements." As a result, they find the "rejection of their proffered solidarity dismaying and confounding, and often react by explaining away African views and blaming Northern conservatives for indoctrinating Southern Anglicans, rather than seeking to understand how homosexuality functions as an issue in other cultural and political contexts around the world."

Avoiding that strategy herself, Hassett looks deeply at Uganda and concludes that "the debate over homosexuality in Uganda is as much over outside influences and the cultural and economic power of the North as it is about the morality of same-sex desire," and that "homosexuality has thus become one of the key points at which Uganda leaders seek to express their ideological independence from Northern cultural influences."

Hassett recognizes that, in the period after the gathering of Anglican bishops at the 1998 Lambeth Conference adopted a resolution critical of same-sex behavior by an overwhelming margin,

> Some Northern liberals and moderates were indeed moved to speak about the global South in derogatory terms. These ideas were widely expressed and represent a real struggle with the painful experiences of Lambeth 1998. In such remarks, American Episcopal liberals and moderates were giving voice to their fear, anger, and sense of alienation from the Southern church, for whom they had previously seen themselves as advocates.

She spends considerable time on the charges and countercharges that Americans on both sides of the debate over sexuality were attempting to buy African votes with promises of aid. She concludes that the question of aid is neither the sole cause for African behavior, nor irrelevant, declaring that



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"from the Ugandan perspective, there is no way to purify North-South relationships of material elements, because there is no way of inequalities to access to resources not to be at issue in these transnational Anglican interactions." Her explanation is this: that the offer of a relationship that may result in the reception of aid can lead Africans to be more vocal about convictions that they already hold, but that Africans are generally unwilling to accept aid based on the requirement that they adopt points of view inimical to their own convictions.

It is this perspective of materially unbalanced relationships that leads Hassett to be critical of Philip Jenkins's argument in *The Next Christendom* about a global shift in power. Jenkins, she charges, underestimates the material inequality between the global South and North, and overstates Southern power.

She closes by warning liberal and moderate Episcopalians not to accept the inevitability of an alliance between conservative Americans and Africans. She suggests that, in place of this scenario, liberals adopt Ian Douglas's dream of "an emerging global Christian community embodying radical differences." This would presumably involve strong alliances between Episcopalians committed to full gay/lesbian inclusion and African Anglicans resistant to such a vision.

In an era in which those involved in the debates over theology and morality in the Anglican Communion increasingly rely upon caricature and overly simple explanations, *Anglican Communion in Crisis* stands out for its closely argued, nuanced discussions and its unwillingness to follow any single party line.

The strengths of the book are also its weaknesses: Close attention to events of the past decade have led the author to neglect the history of ties between Evangelical Episcopalians and Africa that began in the second decade of the 19th century, and her carefully argued prose can read, at times, like an introductory textbook. Nevertheless, this is a book that deserves to be read by anyone with a serious interest in the current state of the Anglican Communion. ♦

# College Daze

*The 'great conversation' is now the sounds of chaos.*

**BY LIAM JULIAN**

The late William F. Buckley Jr. burst onto the national scene in 1951, not because he had just penned a book about the newly formed United Nations and the future of foreign affairs. Nor had he written about, say, the Rosenbergs or the dangers of communism. No, Buckley wrote about college. *God and Man at Yale* reported on (and criticized) the secularization of Buckley's alma mater. The controversy it engendered was widespread—in publications ranging from *Barron*'s to the *Yale Daily News*—and often fierce. Chad Walsh wrote in the *Saturday Review* that "what Mr. Buckley really proposes is that the alumni of Yale should turn themselves into a politburo, and control the campus exactly as the Kremlin controls the intellectual life of Russia."

**Education's End**
*Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life*
by Anthony T. Kronman
Yale, 320 pp., $27.50

Such criticism may have been less than astute; it showed, however, that the future of American higher education was, and is, a sensitive subject. Commentators got the point: Today there is no shortage of material on the bookshelves about our institutions of higher education. What's more, the frequency with which such volumes are published has in no way diminished their ability to cause a sensation.

In 1987, a little-known University of Chicago professor named Allan Bloom set the nation's op-ed pages aflame with *The Closing of the American Mind*, which sold over a million copies. Bloom called *Closing* a "meditation on the state of our souls, particularly those of the young, and their education." He lambasted academia for allowing political correctness to infect curricula and stunt debates: Higher education's mission "to maintain the permanent questions front and center," Bloom wrote, had been obscured. And just three years ago, Tom Wolfe's 752-page *I Am Charlotte Simmons*—about an innocent girl who enrolls at the mythical Dupont University and is immersed in a world of drink, sport, and sex—was in the headlines. An article in the *New York Times Magazine* was entitled "Post-Teenage Wasteland?"

*Education's End* is less sensational than most volumes on higher education, but no less important. Anthony T. Kronman, who teaches at Yale Law School, hasn't merely produced another despairing account of academic shortcomings; instead, *Education's End* explains why colleges have ended up in such bad shape. Kronman argues that universities, especially their humanities departments, have actively made themselves irrelevant—and he documents just how they've done it. They've done it by wittingly giving up on the meaning of life. Universities have encouraged, in their classrooms, the marginalization of what Bloom called "the permanent questions."

"The history of American higher education," Kronman writes, "begins with the establishment of Harvard College in 1636." Nearly all of

*Liam Julian is a writer and editor at the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation and research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford.*



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Harvard's founders were educated at either Cambridge or Oxford, which offered the prototype for Harvard's curriculum: a rigorous study of Latin and Greek, an emphasis on the great books written in those two languages, and courses of study that covered such subjects as ethics, law, ancient history, and theology.

But Harvard's purpose "was not merely to impart certain useful knowledge, which its students were then free to exploit as they chose," writes Kronman. "Harvard's job was to make its students into men of a certain kind, with distinctive attitudes and dispositions, specific cares and concerns." This type of prescriptive education became the norm, and it survived in American higher education for over two centuries. At Yale, well into the 19th century, all freshmen read Homer, sophomores read Cicero, juniors read Plato, and that's just how it was.

After the Civil War, however, such curricular rigidity began to soften, largely in response to two new questions confronting American colleges. The first, which arrived with increased immigration and intermingling of cultures, asked what to do when teaching a single worldview about what constituted the "good life" became untenable. The second was how to address the rise of secularism and religious variety within student bodies. The answer—albeit one that came in many different flavors from college to college—was what Kronman calls "secular humanism."

Secular humanism provided a way to embrace pluralism while still affirming the shared aspects of the human condition. It held that a range of personal experience exists but that the underlying structure that connected undergraduates with their peers (and with Aristotle, for that matter) was solid and unifying. It allowed students to engage in what Michael Oakeshott called a "great conversation" with thinkers present, past, and future.

But modern universities are no longer places where secular humanism rules. Today, higher education, including the humanities, responds to the research ideal, which prizes originality of scholarship and specialization above all else.

Participating in the research ideal is something that all instructors on campus now do. Professors-in-training find it impossible to resist the forces of specialization in graduate school. We've moved away from using facts to deduce larger lessons and toward using facts to uncover even more facts, which makes it necessary to specialize in pinpointed topics.

*Today, professors of English spend the bulk of their time researching and writing about one author or work. (One of my English professors, whom I very much liked, has written extensively on Br'er Rabbit; he is known as something of a Br'er Rabbit authority.)*

For example, professors of English, while they may teach several different courses within a general topic area, spend the bulk of their time researching and writing about one author or one piece of literature. (One of my English professors, whom I very much liked, has written extensively on Br'er Rabbit; he is known as something of a Br'er Rabbit authority.)

The research ideal has produced much good work, especially in the sciences, where specialization has yielded an unprecedented amount of new knowledge, and continues to do so. But according to Kronman it has forced the humanities to reject Oakeshott's "conversation" by championing all new paradigms and rejecting all the old. Thus, instead of interacting with Aristotle, students learn to overturn his modes of thinking, to derive their own ways of making sense of life. These new worldviews do not seek to build upon the foundations of history but to tear down those foundations and replace them. This may seem individualistic—graduate students, especially, are encouraged to chart new territory, to make a name for *themselves* by revealing new knowledge—but in reality the research ideal is collectivist. The voracious pursuit of new knowledge marches forward, indifferent to those who fuel its progress and ignorant of its own ends.

Perhaps this approach works for the sciences—although, as science begins to push into uncharted territory where ethical implications grow complicated, one wonders how well. In the humanities, though, it simply does *not* work. The purpose of reading great books is not to derive minutiae about their authors but to explore the facets of the human experience—to make oneself wiser and better able to answer the meaning-of-life questions that are so basic and important. As Kronman points out, the research ideal is ambivalent about the basis of humanity: life and death.

It's safe to say that university humanities departments are more irrelevant now than ever before, the subject of much mockery and derision outside the ivied campuses. In the feverish search to create new ways of viewing the world, professors have constructed their papers and books and courses on the flimsiest of intellectual bases (deconstruction, diversity studies, etc.). Undergraduates ingest this stuff—sometimes willingly, sometimes not—and the ones who can stomach it go on to graduate school, someday to create schemes of their own.

For American higher education, it's no longer worthwhile to investigate the essential questions that have puzzled humans for thousands of years, most basic among them: What is living for? Curious 20-year-olds will have to look outside their college classrooms for answers. ♦



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*Joseph Breen at work, 1942*

BETTMANN / CORBIS

# The Enforcer

*The standards and practices of long lost Hollywood.*

**BY SONNY BUNCH**

Faced with the prospect of a financially crippling NC-17 rating for his latest film, *Grindhouse*, Quentin Tarantino took a stoic view of the revisions he would have to make. "The [Motion Picture Association of America] has a very hard job and does it as well as they possibly can," he told *USA Today*. "The alternative would be every jerkwater county in America having their own obscenity laws." As a student of the motion picture industry (if not constitutional law), Tarantino knows that he and his peers have it pretty easy compared with their predecessors.

**Hollywood's Censor**
*Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*
by Thomas Doherty
Columbia, 440 pp., $29.50

As legend has it, the Hays Office ruled Hollywood's Golden Age with an iron fist, shielding a pliable public from lewd and lascivious imagery that might "lower the moral standards of those who see it." Less well known is that onetime postmaster general Will Hays was not actually in charge of enforcing the Hays Code. Rather, Joseph Breen controlled the red pen, wielding it to transform the Production Code Administration into a feared and effective tool of studio self-censorship; as Thomas Doherty's new book shows, Breen was so well known around town that *Variety* "coined endless variations on verbs such as 'Breens,' 'Breening,' and 'joebreening' . . . around Hollywood his surname was lingo and his word was law."

Intertwining Breen's life and the establishment of the PCA into a cohesive narrative, Doherty seems most interested in rehabilitating the censor's image. Breen, if he is remembered at all, is dismissed as Victorian-minded, a busybody committed to limiting artistic achievement and freedom of speech on the big screen, and a racist. Doherty provides some context to the charges of anti-Semitism that have dogged Breen's reputation in recent years, combining archival materials and new interviews with Breen's compatriots to paint a fuller picture of the man, his office, and his times.

Before the formation of the PCA in 1934, Joseph Breen worked as a journalist and government functionary, parlaying his Roman Catholic ties into prominent positions and currying favor with the Church intelligentsia. His most notable role, and the one that probably secured his rise to Hollywood's in-house censor, came when he directed the publicity for a silent film commemorating the 1926 International Eucharistic Congress in Chicago. His connections within the Catholic community, and familiarity with the film industry, made him the obvious choice to handle "enforcement" of the Production Code, a document written by a Jesuit priest and the Catholic publisher of *Motion Picture Herald* and suffused with the moral teachings of the Church.

Empowered by the threat of 20 million Catholics boycotting unapproved films, Breen soon turned the Hays Office into a true regulatory agency. "Breen [sat] at the table with the moguls as an equal partner," writes Doherty. "Actually, more than equal. Without Breen, Hollywood could not do business."

What, exactly, was Breen there to excise? Nudity, of course, as well as unnecessarily skimpy clothing. Profanity was out, as was excessive violence. But that wasn't all: Crime couldn't pay—miscreants had to face punishment for what they had done—and

*Sonny Bunch, assistant editor at* THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *reviews movies for the* STANDARD*'s website.*



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there could be no denigration of religion. Dealing drugs in *any* way, even as a cautionary tale in which the pusher is punished, was forbidden. Desecrating the flag and interracial romance were banned. A film's themes were watched as closely as the hemlines of its dancers and the tommy guns of its gangsters.

Breen's role wasn't exclusively negative. He didn't see himself as a censor; in addition to trimming scenes, he made suggestions to improve the substance of films. Arthur Hornblow Jr., producer of the Oscar-winning *Gaslight* (1944), said that Breen "has given me plenty of trouble, on occasion, in the way of making me change scripts to make them conform, but I find there is a great satisfaction in sweating through and getting the points made in the right way, instead of the easy way that is so often the wrong way." Not every producer was so understanding: Howard Hughes and Breen went at it hammer and tongs over several films, most notably *The Outlaw* (1943). Their battle over Jane Russell's décolletage was recreated in Martin Scorsese's recent Hughes biopic, *The Aviator*.

Producers looking to distribute a movie without the seal of approval faced several hurdles. To begin with, it couldn't be shown in any theater owned by one of the major studios; any such exhibition house that screened a nonseal film was subject to heavy fines. The film would almost certainly endure stricter scrutiny from censor boards across the nation, those run by Tarantino's "jerkwater counties." And even if it could find a screen to play on, and survived the censors intact, any film that reached the public without a Code seal faced boycotts from the Catholic Legion of Decency and other groups.

Before the rise of foreign films, independent ventures, and art house fare broke the Production Code's back, Breen's "regime facilitated the artistic creativity and industrial efficiency of the vaunted Golden Age of Hollywood," Doherty argues. It's hard to disagree: Thirteen of the top 30 films in the American Film Institute's most recent list of the 100 greatest American movies were released during Breen's tenure. As Doherty writes, the

> Breen Office maintained the gold standard by helping the major studios refine the substance, polish the surface, and corner the market. . . . Unlike the state and municipal censorship boards, whose rulings were off-the-cuff and whose members rotated with election cycles, the Breen Office was an entrenched bureaucracy with transparent procedures, consistent regulations, stable personnel, and institutional memory.

Doherty's description here draws a contrast between the Breen Office and both the censor boards that littered the country in the first half of the 20th century and the current regime, the Motion Picture Association of America. The modern rating board—the body that hands out Gs to Disney cartoons and Rs to Judd Apatow's raunchy comedies—has come under fire recently for being an opaque, subjective process. *This Film Is Not Yet Rated*, a documentary about the ratings process that focused on the MPAA's most restrictive designation, NC-17, wowed critics and drew plaudits from filmmakers hampered by financially damaging ratings.

Yet the film mostly misses the point—the MPAA is in place to protect children and provide parents with guidance, not protect box office hauls—and you have to wonder which system today's directors would prefer: A subjective process that sometimes leads to head scratching results (such as the NC-17 slapped on *Team America* for explicit puppet-sex) or a Breening process with explicit limits on the amount of blood, flesh, and profanity portrayed on screen guided by an iron hand. ♦

*Jane Russell in* The Outlaw *(1943)*

GETTY IMAGES



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# Room With *View*

*Small change at the Met.* **BY ROBERT MESSENGER**

There are parts of the Metropolitan Museum of Art that seem to me like home. So it was with some trepidation that I wandered in to see the recent reinstallation of the 19th- and 20th-century painting galleries. I'm constitutionally opposed to change, and rehangings are generally done for the worst of reasons—to update galleries to meet our declining tastes and inspire younger visitors and press coverage—and with the worst of results.

More than any other museum, though, the Met has been immune to the faddish, and the goal of connecting its magnificent holdings in 19th-century art to its more recent collecting in Modern is a laudable one. But even with an extra 8,000 square feet, I feared the exile of some old friends, as depth gave way to breadth.

Part of the pleasure of paying regular attendance on a museum is that you know where things are. You can spend all your time looking at the art, rather than stumbling over wall labels and gallery numbers looking for it. To me, going to the Met is like attending a performance of the *Marriage of Figaro*: The plot is clear, the pleasure ready, and I am free to focus on nuance and discover new detail.

I dearly love a little Bonington that the Met acquired in 2001. Just 11 by 13 inches, *View near Rouen* exudes both tradition and modernity. Bonington was English and steeped in its landscape tradition, yet his short career was spent in France amongst painters like Delacroix and Rousseau, from whom he absorbed the new painting techniques coming to the fore in the 1820s. Richard Bonington's decisive strokes look forward to the generation that inspired the Impressionists and beyond. *View near Rouen* is defiantly modern, and yet still Romantic. The painter died, just 26, in 1828—the year after Blake and two years before Delacroix painted *Liberty Leading the People*. (What would English art have been in the 19th century had its most precocious talents, Bonington and Thomas Girtin, not been dead of tuberculosis at 26 and 27?)

*Bonington's* View near Rouen

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

This delicious little Bonington has hung amongst a profusion of French landscapes—many Corots and some Rousseaus—and seemed right at home: a tiny painting amongst many on a long wall. The soft glories of the Corot landscapes highlighted Bonington's deft coloring, especially the thick paint he used to create his high summer foliage. It was one of those lovely unfrequented rooms in a busy museum, and offered me instant refreshment.

I had no trouble finding the room, but all was changed. I was farther along the painterly chronology, and so stumbled back a generation and into a smaller room looking around for my friend. Yes, here were the Corots. Actually, here were a lot of Corots. What a delightful room, I thought, as I settled myself onto a bench in the middle. I counted 32 paintings, and all Corots. His whole career seemed on display, from some early studies of the Italian *campagna* to those great late figuratives of women in poses drawn from the Renaissance masters. With Corot, the small landscapes are much more important than the grand allegories, and how well the Met has done by the *Wheelwright's Yard* and the *Ferryman* and the *Ville d'Avray* pictures.

This room seemed to represent everything that a museum can do right: collect in depth, focus your scholarly and technical resources on your holdings, commit to displaying works no matter how unfashionable an artist may be generation to generation, and show an artist in multiple and in rooms that encourage the visitor to consider the artist's achievement. We are told that museums must have blockbuster shows to attract corporate dollars and the extra thousands of visitors needed to balance the books. It may be true, but I don't know many museums that use their corporate lucre to produce as perfect a room as this full of Corots.

In the end, I found the Met's reinstallation a triumph. Drawing on the scholarly gambits of recent big shows such as "Manet/Velázquez," "Crossing the Channel," and "Painters in Paris," the Met's curators have told a continuous story of art's 19th-century revolution, making much of Courbet, Manet, Cézanne, Picasso, but finding room to bring in the American and British painters who absorbed the great events of Paris and even painters who rejected them. Figures like Dagnan-Bouveret and Henry Lerolle are treated respectfully. Change is bad, but it does have occasional recompenses.

Though never without victims. My dear little Bonington has suffered. He now holds court, with the Met's other Bonington, on a tiny two-foot space to the left of a doorway. He won't get much attention in the days to come, I fear. But I will do my best to keep his spirits up. ♦

*Robert Messenger is a senior editor at* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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# Goo to Go

*Sometimes a guy needs to see a chick flick.*

**BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

There is a fault line running through America, a chasm so vast that it cannot be bridged. It is not the divide between the Hillary voter and the Obama voter, or between the red state and the blue state. These are rifts that *can* be healed. The same may not be said for the gap between the average male moviegoer and the phenomenon known as the "chick flick."

**Then She Found Me**
Directed by Helen Hunt

The problem, quite simply, is goo. The average male moviegoer likes literal, actual goo—stuff that oozes, especially Karo syrup dyed red to look like blood. The depiction of such goo provokes a visceral thrill. He cannot, however, abide emotional goo, by which I mean scenes intended to provoke a sentimental response, especially if those scenes involve children, relationships, or disease.

The depiction of that kind of goo leaves our male moviegoer in a state of frantic unease, comparable to the most dreadful moment he can imagine: that moment when the woman in his life says, "I think we need to talk about our relationship." He would rather go to the dentist than live through any sort of evocation of that confrontation with direct and unambiguous feeling.

It may be true that women are now better educated than men, that women in the middle and upper-middle classes may either be at parity in salary, or edging ahead. But there is one thing women cannot do, and that is to get their significant male others to attend a movie laden with emotional goo. And so it is the women who compromise, and Hollywood knows it: You can get females to go to movies men want to see, but you cannot get men to go to movies women want to see.

This is why there are so few chick flicks. Which is really too bad, because it is only in the chick flick these days that a moviegoer can be rewarded with a story that takes place in some reasonable facsimile of the real world, involving characters who bear some resemblance to actual human beings.

There used to be all kinds of movies made for a predominantly male audience in which story and character were paramount: workplace dramas, westerns, war movies, detective stories, gangster tales. Those movies are now extremely rare. They have been supplanted by science fiction, horror, comic-book, and wildly comic films whose primary characteristic is precisely that they do *not* take place in a recognizable reality.

*Helen Hunt*

THINKFILM

The most remarkable American film to be released in 2008, so far, is a chick flick that is so chick-flicky Hollywood wouldn't even touch it. Helen Hunt, onetime star of the sitcom *Mad About You* and a most unlikely Best Actress Oscar winner 10 years ago for *As Good As It Gets*, has coauthored, directed, and is the star of *Then She Found Me*. In times past, this tale of a woman put up for adoption as a baby, whose birth mother tracks her down just as her marriage collapses and her adoptive mother suddenly dies, would have been a major studio release. Hunt spent more than a decade trying to get it made, and finally found a small production shop to give her a few million dollars and just 27 days to film it.

The lack of big-studio gloss turns out to have been a creative blessing. *Then She Found Me* is a passionate, urgent, funny, sad, and sobering piece of work, with an unromanticized Brooklyn setting. The characters have as many layers as an onion, and *Then She Found Me* peels them. The protagonist is as flawed and capable of bad behavior as the man who walks out on her, the woman who abandoned her as a baby, the cruel woman who raised her, and the wounded divorced man she begins going out with. They all make mistakes, they all hurt each other; but in the end, they are ordinary, reasonably decent people trying to get through the day.

There are flaws in *Then She Found Me*. Hunt has chosen to emphasize the Jewish observance of her characters, so it is disheartening to see her get various details wrong about that observance. She even has her character go out on a date during the seven-day period of mourning following the death of a family member, which would be inconceivable. That aside, *Then She Found Me* is a small miracle. The undeniable fact that no man, aside from a deeply evolved person such as myself, will allow himself to be taken to see it is his loss. ♦

*John Podhoretz, editorial director of* Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*



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*"Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton are undeniably exhausted. They've been campaigning hard for more than a year, and their wall-to-wall schedules won't let up anytime soon. . . . Fatigue, however, breeds unforced errors—and both candidates have made some in the past few weeks."* —Associated Press, *April 24, 2008*

# Parody

NDAY, MAY 5, 2008 — ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

## FOR DEMOCRATS, EXHAUSTION LEADS TO DELIRIUM, BLITHERING

### Sleep-Deprived Candidates on Verge of Breakdown

By PATRICK HEALY

INDIANAPOLIS — Supporters of both Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama expressed concern and bewilderment after both candidates turned in what one Democratic strategist termed "at best, lackluster performances" at last night's State House debate. Nonpartisan analysts described the event as "disheartening," "pitiful," and "frightening."

From the outset, confusion reigned as Mrs. Clinton alternately referred to Senator Obama as "Rick" and "Congressman Lazio." On several occasions the senator from New York slumped onto the podium until one of her aides gave her a dozen chili and cayenne peppers, which she washed down with a Red Bull energy drink. Raising a can, the senator offered a toast "for everyone who has ever been counted out, those who were told to dump their husbands but didn't, and little girls at my events who lift their mothers and fathers and remind them, 'It takes a village!' "

Barack Obama, for his part, uncharacteristically slouched throughout the evening. Asked how he would respond to an attack against Israel, the Illinois senator said he would coordinate his actions carefully with "Prime Minister Meir" and not rule out a dialogue with "Mr. Pahlavi, though he should not be allowed to come to this country for medical treatment." In his closing statement, Mr. Obama reminded the audience that "we are the ones who've been waiting. We are the children. We are the ones who make a brighter day, so let's start giving. For that is the story of America: Extraordinary people doing ordinary things."

REUTERS / Jim Young

Senator Clinton gets a much-needed boost of energy from a sugar-packed Pixy stick, her 30th of the evening.

(Senator Obama would regain his energy later that night, however, when he played a game of one-on-one basketball against his friend Danny Granger in the State House parking lot. Final score: Obama, 16, Granger, 4.)

The length and intensity of the Democratic primaries do appear to have taken a heavy toll on the candidates, both mentally and physically. The likely Republican nominee, Senator John McCain, on the other hand, has had much time to gather his strength. Reached at his ranch in Sedona, Mr. McCain said, "There's nothing better for my Chakras than a nice, hot-stone massage after a weeklong slumber in a hyperbaric

*Continued on Page A20*

## China Remaps Torch Route, Adds Pyongyang, Khartoum, Rangoon

URNS

past a bombed-out baby formula factory and several working chromite mines.



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